

Price 25 Cents

Thirty Cents
in
Canada


APRIL 1929

THE *Illustrated* BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

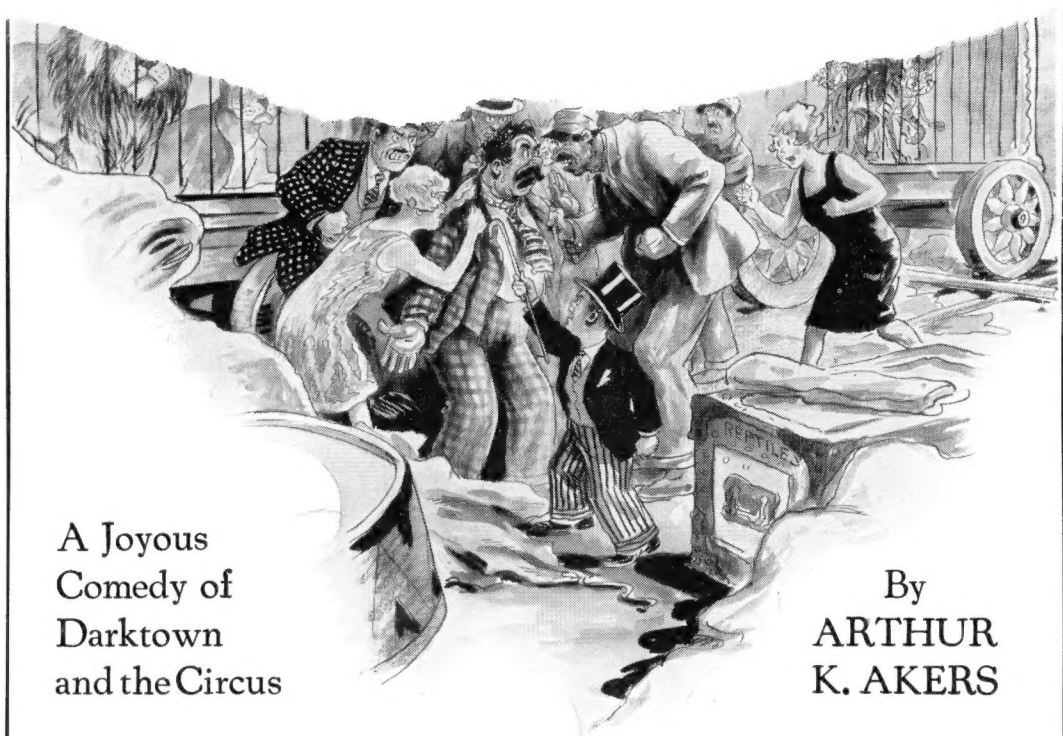
N.S.E.

TANAR
By the
Author of
TARZAN



James
Edwin Baum,
Lemuel De Bra,
Clarence Herbert New,
Harold Titus & Others

\$500 IN CASH
for Real
Experiences



A Joyous
Comedy of
Darktown
and the Circus

By
ARTHUR
K. AKERS

“Don’t Mess Wid No Lions”

There’s a laugh in every line of this delightful story. And there’s a thrill in every paragraph of the romance which begins in the same issue—“The Girl from God’s Mercie,” by William Byron Mowery. Be sure to read these and the many other specially interesting features, *In the March issue, now on sale, of—*

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

The Consolidated Magazines Corporation, Publisher, 36 So. State St., Chicago.

Last Year's Pay Looks Like Small Change to These Men Today!



\$525 a Week

Wm. Shore, Neenach, Cal., a former cow-puncher, reports earning \$525 in a single week as a salesman. He earned \$3,000 in 5 months just after completing N. S. T. A. training.



\$10,000 a Year

R. B. Hansen, Akron, O., writes that he jumped his earnings from \$100 a month to \$10,000 a year as a result of reading the amazing book, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship."



\$700 a Month

L. O. Halloman, Roswell, N. Mex., was a farmer. He wanted to be a salesman and N. S. T. A. helped him. Now he says his earnings are \$700 in one month.

Here Are Six Men Who Were Formerly Caught in the Hopeless Treadmill of Low-Pay Jobs. Today Every One of Them Report Earnings from \$4,000 up to \$10,000 a Year! Right Now—the Same Opportunity That Changed Their Lives So Completely Is Open to YOU! Don't Fail to Read Every Word of This Vital Message!

WHEN a man who has been struggling along in a low-pay job suddenly steps out and starts earning real money—\$5,000, \$7,500 or \$10,000 a year, he usually gives his friends quite a shock. It is hard for them to believe that he is the same man they used to know. Take one of the men whose pictures appear on this page—Kingsley Rowland of New Jersey, for example. His pals in the shop where he was working as a pattern-maker laughed at his ambitions to make more money. But he knew what he wanted, and he set about getting it in the shortest possible way. A remarkable free book, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship," opened his eyes to the opportunities in the selling profession. This book proved that Master Salesmen are *made*, not *born*. It told facts and secrets about money-making that were a positive revelation. And best of all, it outlined a simple plan that enables men from all walks of life to quickly reach the top without spending years on the road—without losing a day or a dollar from their present positions!

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

Rowland seized the opportunity to qualify as a Master Salesman, and has richly profited by it. He now reports an increase of \$2,500 in his pay, and his future possibilities are unlimited. Some of his former friends perhaps say he was "lucky." He was. But his "luck" lay in his decision to cast his lot with the N. S. T. A. Thousands of other men have been similarly "lucky." Some report increases ranging up to 900%. They have forgotten the days when they were caught in the rut—but they never forget that they owe a great part of their success to N. S. T. A. training.

Your Income Multiplied Or You Pay Nothing

N. S. T. A. is now offering, to every man who wants to increase his income, an amazing Double Money-Back bond that assures you a definite stipulated addition to your income, within three months after your training is completed—or the course costs you nothing. This daring offer is possible only because of the success of thousands of members. Send coupon immediately for full details.

National Salesmen's Training Association

N. S. T. A. Building

Dept. D-31

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



\$2,500 Increase

As a pattern-maker, the income of Kingsley Rowland, Audubon, N. J., was limited to \$1,500 a year. Now he writes that it is about \$4,000, thanks to N. S. T. A.



\$7,200 a Year

F. J. Walsh, Springfield, Mass., thanks N. S. T. A. training for his sensational rise from \$1,000 a year as a clerk to over \$7,200 a year.



\$4,800 More

F. B. Englehardt, Chattanooga, Tenn., writes that he raised his pay \$4,800 after reading "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship." He credits N. S. T. A. with a great deal of his success.

Send for This FREE BOOK

You may have doubts in your own mind about how salesmanship can help you to solve your own problem. If so, we cannot urge you too strongly to read the same fascinating message that inspired Rowland, Shore, Englehardt, and the thousands of others who took this remarkable short cut to success. If we were asking two or three dollars a copy for "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship," you might hesitate. But it is now FREE! See for yourself what salesmanship has done for others—and what the National Salesmen's Training Association stands ready to do for you. No matter what your present thoughts on selling are, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" will give you a new insight into this fascinating and highly-paid profession. Mail the coupon for your Free copy **NOW!**



National Salesmen's Training Assn.
Dept. D-31, N. S. T. A. Bldg.,
Chicago, Ill.

Without cost or obligation, please send me your book, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship," also full details of your guarantee of additional earnings while learning.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

THE BLUE BOOK

EDWIN BALMER, Editor
DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

Copyright, 1929, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation (The Blue Book Magazine).
Copyright, 1929, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation in Great Britain and the Dominions.

Cover Design: Painted by Frank Hoban to illustrate "Tanar of Pellucidar."
Frontispiece: "Men of the Frontier—Chief Joseph." Drawn by Ralph Frederick.

Two Fascinating Serials

- The Lair of the Leopard** By James Edwin Baum 7
A thrilling novel of savage Abyssinia by the noted explorer who gave us "Spears in the Sun." (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)
- Tanar of Pellucidar** By Edgar Rice Burroughs 76
Tarzan himself is outdone in the hair-raising adventures of this intrepid wayfarer in a new world. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

Spirited Short Stories

- "No Flyer Is Ever Lost"** By Robert Winchester 40
A delightful aeronautical romance by the gifted author of "My Deputy." (Illustrated by Ralph Frederick.)
- Tails, We Win** By Jonathan Brooks 54
Trotting-horse races afford a quaint and very American sport vividly pictured in this lively story. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)
- The Shacker** By Harold Titus 64
The distinguished author of "Timber" and "The Tough Nut" here offers a fine story of the North Michigan woods. (Illustrated by Ralph Frederick.)
- The Episode of the Juxacanna** By Leland S. Jamieson 98
An army pursuit pilot puts his experience to good use in this swift-moving tale of the air and the sea. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)
- Cossack and Cowboy** By Bud La Mar 109
A joyous chronicle of circus life by the professional rider who gave us "Buckin' the Air" and "Scandalous Bill to the Rescue." (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)
- Mysteries of Today** By Culpeper Zandt 116
"The Case of Roger Vernon" presents one of the most intriguing detective stories published this year. (Illustrated by Ben Cohen.)
- Gunsight Forever** By Ray Humphreys 129
A Colorado old-timer drives his mules in a tremendously exciting race. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)
- Not for Sale** By Lemuel De Bra 134
One of the best stories of Chinatown and the underworld this favorite Blue Book writer has ever produced. (Illustrated by William Molt.)
- Shanghai Bill** By Captain Dingle 145
A sheep and a sailor run into stirring times in this engaging story of the sea by the author of "Three Mates." (Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson.)

THE CONSOLIDATED MAGAZINES CORPORATION, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine,
36 South State Street, Chicago, Ill.

LOUIS ECKSTEIN
President

CHARLES M. RICHTER
Vice-President

RALPH K. STRASSMAN
Vice-President

Office of the Director of Advertising, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York City, N. Y.
LONDON OFFICES, 6 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C.

Entered as second-class matter July 24, 1906, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

MAGAZINE

APRIL, 1929

Special Notice to Writers and Artists:
Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will only be received on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 155

"Enemies of Peace" deals with an important international crisis in the illuminating fashion typical of its author. (Illustrated by William Molt.)

A Lively Novelette

The Hidden Trail By E. S. Pladwell 168

Events happen fast and furiously in this attractive novelette by the author of "A Good Guy, but Rough." (Illustrated by William Molt.)

Five Prize Stories of Real Experience

A Yukon Hold-up By Sergeant Pat Egan 183

An officer of the Mounted tells of his most exciting arrest.

Shipwrecked By Captain Roland Burgess 186

A terrific ordeal in an open boat on the North Atlantic.

Saved by a Voice By William A. Galbraith 188

Attacked by renegade Indians, this ranger and his forest had a narrow escape.

Shot Down By John Lee Pierson 191

A war-time pilot describes the supreme crisis of his service.

Blue, Fast Color By W. Hamilton Stuart 193

Wherein a movie-director encounters dark trouble.



Leland S. Jamieson

The able author of "Altitude" in our last issue, and of "The Episode of the Juxacanna" in this, is an army instructor of pursuit pilots at Kelly Field, and knows a lot about airplanes and the men who fly them. He reveals, moreover, exceptional gifts in the difficult art of fiction-writing; and we are glad to announce that another of his powerful stories will appear in the next issue under the title—

"The Chinati Hills Affair"

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$3.00 a year in advance. Canadian postage 50c per year. Foreign postage \$1.00 per year. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publisher. Remittances must be made by Draft, Post Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check, because of exchange charges against the latter.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through an agent unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler; in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date (April issue out March 1st), and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands or on trains, a notification to the Publisher will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close on the third of second month preceding date of issue. Advertising rates on application.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

made by the
ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE
in 10 Years



THE present hour sees a great change taking place in business. Small businesses are being gathered together into great institutions. The position of Vice-President in charge of Production, or Sales or Finance, in one of these great institutions is a larger responsibility than the presidency of a small business used to be. There has come an increasing demand for an expansion of the Institute's pro-

gram to meet these changed conditions.

Beginning immediately, therefore, we shall offer to business executives a four-fold service, incorporating the results of two years of work with leaders of business management and business education. From this four-fold service, executives may now choose any one of the following courses, depending on their own particular business requirements:

1. The Complete Course and Service for General Executives
2. A Special Course and Service in Marketing Management
3. A Special Course and Service in Production Management
4. A Special Course and Service in Finance Management

THIS enlarged program is too important and far-reaching to be set forth in an advertisement. Its value to executives is admirably summed up in the words of Percy H. Johnston, President of the Chemical National Bank of New York, who considers it "the most significant step taken in business education in the past ten years."

We have prepared a special booklet describing the entire program, with particular reference to the new features. We should like to circulate this widely and to the following groups of men

—The heads of businesses who recognize

that the training of competent associates is their major problem.

—Executives interested especially in Marketing, Production and Finance, who want to concentrate their efforts along one of these branches of business.

—Younger men who desire definite training in the management of the particular departments of business in which they are now engaged.

For convenience, a coupon is provided below. We invite you to inform yourself on this great forward step in business education by mailing it at once

To the ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE, 810 Astor Place, New York City

Please send me the facts about the Institute's new four-fold service.

Name.....Position.....

Business Address.....

In Canada, address the Alexander Hamilton Institute, Ltd., C. P. R. Bldg., Toronto

He Who Writes

LONG ago some one acutely observed: "*He who writes goes to confession.*"

And many years at an editorial desk have confirmed the accuracy of this observation—and increased our respect for the men and women who write successful fiction. Most of them are, by their own confessions—by what they betray of themselves and their standards—the salt of the earth. If they were not, you would not like their stories.

The labor of a successful fiction-writer is greater than the lay reader can realize. His rewards, both material and spiritual, are likewise great. The most valuable of them, we believe, has best been stated by George Eliot—a novelist so important that her poems are less known:

*"May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty . . .
So shall I join that choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world."*

Not all fiction-writers, of course, have aims so high or standards so fine. Yet many of them, consciously or not, are keenly sensitive to the significance and responsibility of their jobs; and to them we owe a gratitude too seldom expressed.

To Clarence Herbert New, for instance, who for eighteen years has given us entertainment well laden with information and purpose—

To Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose extraordinary romances of Tarzan

and of Tanar so well serve to lift us far from the drab dullness of this often humdrum world—

To James Edwin Baum, Warren Hastings Miller, Beatrice Grimshaw, Culpeper Zandt, Roy Norton and the others who write picturesque tales of high courage in far places, and to Arthur Carhart, Jay Lucas, Harold Titus, Rollin Brown, E. S. Pladwell, Bigelow Neal, H. C. Wire and those whose stirring stories of adventure on our own frontiers do indeed enkindle generous ardor—

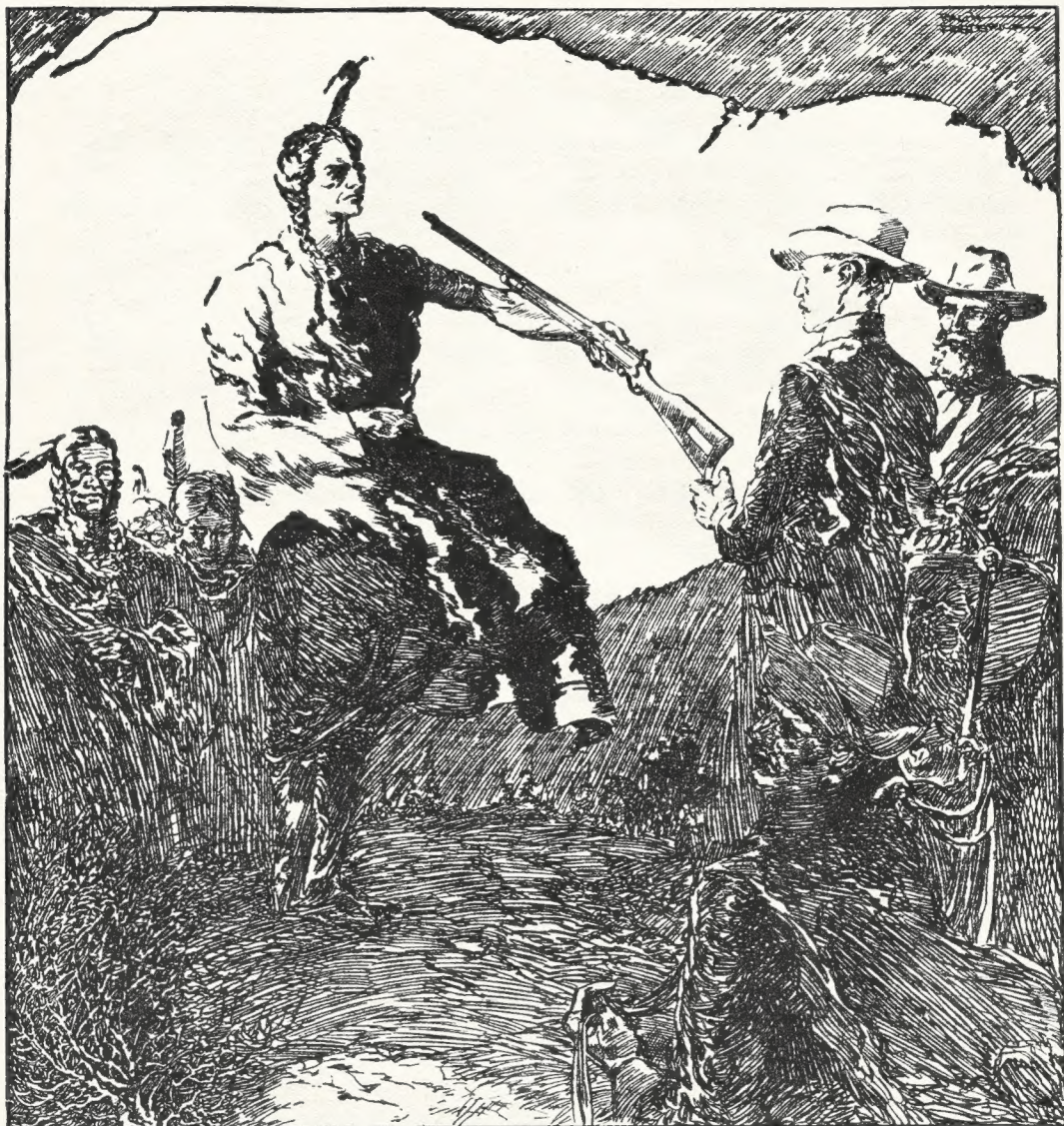
To Bertram Atkey, Bud La Mar, George Allan England and the other writers blessed with the rare rich gift of humor—whose stories beget the smiles that have no cruelty—

To writers like Stephen H. Orcutt, Lemuel De Bra and Seven Anderton whose detective stories are so intriguing—

To these, and to many other professional writers—and to those of our readers who have through their stories of real experience joined them—we wish here and now to state our appreciation of what they do for us

Moreover, as we survey the wealth of material awaiting publication already in hand, and think of the other good things we know our writers are now at work upon, we are able to promise you even greater cause for gratitude. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, in these coming months, will be made up of stories by people who realize the importance and significance of their job.

—The Editors.



Drawn by Ralph Frederick

MEN OF THE FRONTIER

Chief Joseph

CHIEF JOSEPH and the few hundred survivors of his Nez Percé tribe had been surrounded at last; shells from the white man's artillery were falling among them. For two thousand miles Chief Joseph had led his people—who had been deprived of their own ancestral lands—over the mountains of Idaho and Montana, seeking escape from the soldiers and sanctuary beyond the Canadian border, in a retreat that for skill, valor and endurance has few parallels in all history. They had fought eleven battles against greatly superior forces; half of the three hundred warriors had been killed.

"Tell General Howard," said Chief Joseph when he had handed his rifle in token of sur-

render to General Miles, "that I know his heart. What he told me before—I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Too-hul-hul-sote is dead. The old men are all dead. He who led the young men" (Joseph's brother) "is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want time to look for my children, to see how many of them I can find; maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs, my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more with the white man."

The **LAIR** *of the* **LEOPARD**

By JAMES EDWIN BAUM

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

A captivating story of an American's tremendous adventure in the least-known land on earth, by the venturesome explorer who gave us "Spears in the Sun."

"IT is a land from w'ich no man has ever returned."

Birhano, Martindale's interpreter, made the statement with all the assurance of absolute certainty.

"Eh?" Martindale questioned, surprised. "A land from which no man has ever returned? Not—one—man?"

"Master," Birhano answered in the same positive tones, "there is no man—living or dead—who has entered the country of the Danakils and returned again to his own *tukul*—his home."

Martindale stood in the middle of the floor in his temporary quarters, surrounded by a litter of camp equipment. The big double-barreled cordite rifle in its worn leather case trailed from his left hand, its heavy butt resting upon the floor. Birhano's astonishing information fell among Martindale's usually careful mental processes like an explosive bullet in a herd of quietly feeding zebra. He gazed through the open door, his eyes scarcely noting the dried and shriveled naked body of a *shifta*—or brigand—that swung and rattled in its clanking chains from a giant wild fig tree just across the marketplace. That gruesome evidence of the swift eye-for-an-eye Abyssinian justice had already become commonplace since Martindale's arrival a week before in Addis Ababa, the barbaric capital of that African feudal kingdom. And a leper, wrapped in a dirty *shamma*, squatting beneath the sun-dried carcass of the brigand, and tolling a little bell intermi-

nably to solicit alms from the barefooted blacks that passed and repassed in hurrying swarms, no longer caught his attention.

Even the swanking progress of an Abyssinian chief, muffled to the eyes in a black burnous, and riding in state upon his gaudily arrayed saddle mule, surrounded by a cloud of stalwart retainers and vassals armed with spears and ancient black-powder guns, received only an absent-minded glance. And the dozen shiny Shankalla slaves carrying the crude cooking-vessels of their master, trotting behind like a pack of cur-dogs, passed the door unnoticed.

MARTINDALE stepped over a pack-saddle and leaned the big gun carefully, affectionately, against the wall. It had been to him upon former African expeditions an infallible life-insurance policy. He turned and eyed Birhano coldly; he was skeptical of all native information.

"And where did you hear that?" he asked.

Birhano laid a pair of his master's hunting shoes on the camp cot and met the white man's eyes unflinchingly. With impressive seriousness he answered:

"Perhaps it is not known to the Feringi—the white man—that even the *zebanias*—the soldiers—of Ras Tessayah dare not go into the Danakil country to collect the taxes?"

"Never heard of the Danakil tribe," Martindale admitted. "What's wrong with them?"

"There are—oh, many things—wrong

with them, master," the interpreter announced without hesitation. "They are veree fierce, *kufanoo* men. It is well known in this country that no Danakil warrior can take the woman he wants until he has first killed a man. But it is more easier to tell w'at is good of the Danakils, because there is onlee one good thing—they do not eat the meat of men."

"That is rather the height of something or other when the best that can be said for a tribe is that they are not cannibals!" Martindale observed dryly.

Birhano became vehement. The ferocity of the Danakils was so well known in Abyssinia that he could not understand anyone, even a new arrival, questioning the fact.

"Many years ago, w'en Menelik was king, he is send into the Danakil country a veree lar-rge army of *zebanias*. The brother of my father was in that gr-reat army. There were many mules to carry food. There were—oh, many hundreds of *zebanias*. They are go to collect the taxes." The Abyssinian paused impressively.

"Well—what happened to them?"

"That was a long time ago w'en my father was onlee a boy." And Birhano added, dramatically: "Not one man of that gr-reat host has ever come home to his *tukul*."

TAKING the map from his small tin-lined rawhide trunk, Martindale traced the boundaries of that land from which no traveler had ever returned. He found the Danakil country to be a part of Abyssinia. It lay upon the extreme eastern border and extended almost to the Red Sea. The geographical features of its interior were unmarked upon his map—the region was indeed a *Terra Incognita*.

Birhano busied himself with the camp equipment, and Martindale sat down upon the rawhide trunk. His gaze wandered through the open door to the gesticulating, vociferous crowds in the market. Arab and Indian traders sat cross-legged beneath cotton sun-shades and haggled over the price of glass beads, cotton cloth and leather goods. Tall Gallas from the southern deserts, almost naked, their chocolate-colored skins gleaming in the bright sunlight like burnished copper, paused to examine iron spear-points. A debtor and creditor, their arms fastened together by a short length of jingling chain in the ancient Abyssinian manner, picked their way carefully among the bargainners. Horsemen in high-peaked red leather saddles dashed back and forth

on small wiry ponies, showing off their mounts to prospective purchasers, scattering the crowd. Women, squatting beside little piles of rock salt, kinky hair glistening in its coating of *ghee*, or rancid butter, called their wares in strident tones.

But Martindale was not interested in the polyglot life of the bazaar. Birhano's statement had aroused a train of speculations. He looked beyond the teeming market, past the grass-roofed *tukuls* of the town to the far-off Entoto Hills shimmering in the African sun. Scraps of old rumors returned to his mind. He remembered the mysterious disappearance of the elephant-hunter Delong, that bearded and morose old-timer whom he had once met on the shores of Lake Rudolph: a strange and eccentric man, grouchy and solitary as an old bull rhinoceros, an inveterate ivory-poacher, a wonderful hand with dangerous natives, and a dead shot. Could Delong, by any chance, have ventured into the Danakil country and "finished out" upon the gleaming spears of those savages? Martindale thought it not unlikely. Delong would most certainly have trekked into that hazardous area if he had happened to hear that no other white man had ever returned from there.

Glancing again at his map, Martindale was struck with the proximity of the Danakil country to the stamping ground of the Mad Mullah, whose swift raids caused such havoc in Somaliland a few years ago. There were some who claimed that the Mad Mullah had not been killed, as officially reported, but had retired to some dim unexplored region of sun and sand—or, as they say in Africa, "into the blue." Martindale's eyes burned with intensity.

"Here," he thought, with a finger upon that intriguing blank space, "may be the one big opportunity. It is quite likely that new species of animals, unclassified and unknown to science, range that virgin territory. And what a satisfaction to be able to give to the world first-hand and intimate information on a tribe that has so long successfully defied all investigation! Where in the world today can be found another land—an inhabited land—that has not been at least partly explored?"

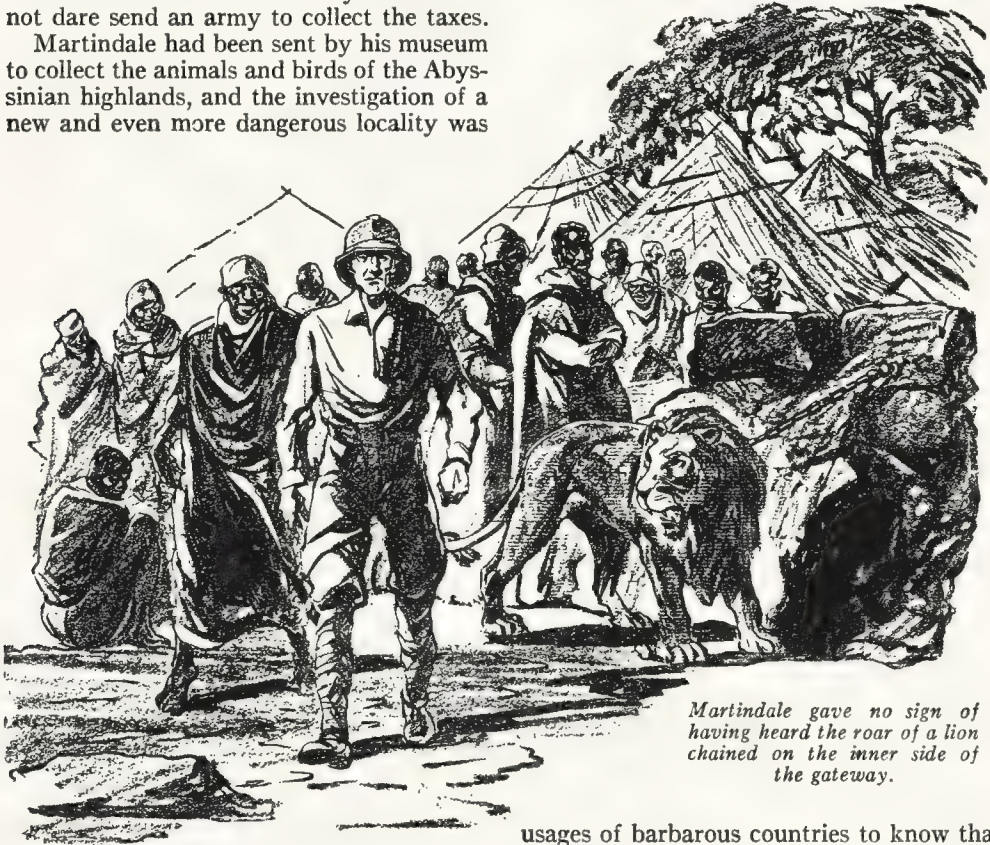
HE dismissed Birhano without giving an inkling of his rising determination, and paced the floor weighing the chances of survival if he should enter that unmapped land of mystery. Even the better known parts of Abyssinia, Martindale knew, were none

too safe, with their *shiftas* and Galla brigands, their barbaric feudal barons who had never known any law but their own violent passions—proud and half-savage chieftains with hordes of black barefooted retainers and spearmen. What then, he wondered, would the Danakil country be—where even the ruler of the turbulent Abyssinians did not dare send an army to collect the taxes.

Martindale had been sent by his museum to collect the animals and birds of the Abyssinian highlands, and the investigation of a new and even more dangerous locality was

"to find, almost in my path, a land from which no man has ever returned. Not one man! I believe," he added softly, a whimsical light coming into his eyes, "yes, I am sure, that I shall do my damndest to drop in informally upon the Danakil gentry."

But he was familiar enough with the



Martindale gave no sign of having heard the roar of a lion chained on the inner side of the gateway.

no part of his work. But the exploration of an utterly unknown country had been to him for years one of those secret longings that many of us hold in the back of our heads perhaps for a lifetime.

He paused now before the open door and watched the sunlight fade slowly upon the far-away Entoto Hills. The crowd was drifting from the bazaar in straggling groups. The leper, still ringing his little bell, hobbled down a side road on the way to his own grass-roofed hovel somewhere in the lower part of town.

Martindale took the big cordite rifle from its case, examined it lovingly from stock to muzzle, raised it tentatively to his shoulder and leaned it again against the wall.

"Almost too good to be true," he mused,

usages of barbarous countries to know that permission to enter such a dangerous area would never be granted. And he decided to make no mention of it in his coming interview with Ras Tessayah, Regent of Abyssinia. He would keep his half-formed plans to himself, and if an auspicious occasion arose, he would act instantly.

CHAPTER II

MARTINDALE had heard much of the strange customs of the Abyssinian court. For the few white travelers who have penetrated to the capital of that ancient kingdom of Prester John have described with gusto its bizarre mixture of Oriental magnificence and crude medievalism. And so, the next afternoon, as Mar-

tindale, followed by his interpreter, walked through the gate of the fortified stone wall surrounding Ras Tessayah's dwelling, he was but mildly startled at the earth-shaking roar of a huge black-maned lion, chained, like any house-dog, just beyond springing distance on the inner side of the gateway.

Before the great throng of warriors, armed variously with ancient smooth-bore muskets, curved scimitars and long-bladed spears, Martindale gave no sign of having heard that disconcerting roar. He was too familiar with Africans to show surprise or to relax that dignity and self-possession that goes so far to establish prestige.

THE white man was received by a court official, a tall Abyssinian belonging to the priesthood, judging from his spotless *shamma* and the white turban that circled his head. They passed through the crowded courtyard with its groups of gayly bedecked saddle-mules held by chattering Shankalla and Nubian slaves, and went on through crowds of idle retainers and *zebanias*, or soldiers, and entered a barnlike structure. It was a crude affair with grass roof built in the usual round style, a glorified Abyssinian *tukul*. There were no windows, and a dim light filtered through rows of narrow ports or slits with platforms below for rifle-men to stand on. With its high surrounding wall, thick-stone sides, loopholed, it typified the stronghold of a barbaric ruler who has no intention of being dethroned by any sudden disaffection of his subjects.

Martindale and Birhano were told to wait near the entryway. The court attendant hurried forward and disappeared behind a cloth curtain that hung from the rafters to the rough stone floor and effectually screened the far half of the room. The old man returned almost immediately with the information that the British Resident was in audience with the Abyssinian regent, and there would be some delay.

In a few moments an angry voice came through the flimsy curtain. It was a stormy voice, and the words were English:

"There has been entirely too much of that sort of thing going on," the voice stated forcefully. "The natives of British Somaliland are wards of the British sovereign. The Union Jack flies above their principal villages, and they are entitled to its protection. Ras Tessayah, it is your duty as ruler of Abyssinia to prevent raids by your people into our Somali territory!"

Martindale could not distinguish the

words of the low reply which came through an interpreter. This was a serious affair, he knew—a ticklish diplomatic matter between the British Empire and the kingdom of Abyssinia—and the American felt like an eavesdropper. He rose to withdraw, but the Englishman again had the floor:

"I shall send a full report of this slave raid to my sovereign. It is the third time within a year that I have been forced to do this. Conditions upon the Somali border are rapidly becoming worse, and I will say frankly to Your Highness that I have no idea how long my government will put up with this sort of thing. I wish you a very good afternoon, sir!" And the click of boot-heels resounded upon the stone floor as the representative of His Britannic Majesty's government marched out a side door.

Martindale was surprised at the brusque tone and the abrupt termination of the conversation. He knew something of the precarious position of Abyssinia, the only independent kingdom left in all Africa. He had a distinct feeling of admiration for this race that could retain its independence while the rest of the immense continent had been taken over by European powers. But from the words of the British Resident, Martindale judged that Abyssinia, unless Ras Tessayah put a stop to slave raiding, would not remain independent much longer.

Martindale was fully in accord with the Englishman in his determined stand upon the slavery question. To the American, slavery had always been one of the greatest crimes of the human race. The clearest memory of his early boyhood was the recollection of his grandfather, a tall, raw-boned backwoodsman, standing on the hewn slab floor of the Indiana cabin in which Martindale had been born, raising clenched and horny fists above his head in fierce denunciation of the principle of human bondage. Martindale's father had been a chip of the old block, and those strong anti-slavery sentiments had been passed on to his son.

ANOTHER dark-skinned courtier appeared and announced that the great Ras Tessayah was ready. Martindale noted with amusement that Birhano was a-tremble with the importance of the coming interview. The curtain was pulled aside, and the white man saw, seated upon a raised platform in a modern European chair, a slight but darkly bearded man. A purple cloak or burnous, over a spotless white *shamma*, covered the slim shoulders.



Directly behind Ras Tessayah stood four or five personal attendants. The face of the ruler was calm and inscrutable, giving no sign of his thoughts, as Ras Tessayah rose and stepped forward, shaking hands in the Western manner and smiling a guarded smile of welcome.

"I am pleased that you are come to my country," Birhano translated.

"It is a great pleasure," Martindale answered formally, "to meet the ruler of the Abyssinians."

A chair was placed, and as they sat down facing each other a slight pause ensued. Martindale knew that he was expected to give his reasons for coming to Abyssinia.

"I have come to your country to collect specimens of your animals and birds, that the people in my country, America, may know what sort of wild animals dwell in your land."

The interpreter translated the reply:

"Some of my people, they have heard

of America country. It is onlee right thing that your people should learn of Abyssinia. I am glad you are come."

Martindale was surprised and delighted. He had heard much of the veiled hostility of this ancient kingdom, its inborn distrust and dislike of Occidental civilization and everything connected with it. Such a welcome from its ruler was a pleasant surprise. The interpreter continued:

"He say he is mos' friendly wi-ith America people. He say he do not so much like the Feringi"—white man—"from European country maybe, for he think they are want to own his country sometime, and he want to keep his country for his people. But he say America do not want thi-is country, and so he allow you to go w'ere you will."

MARTINDALE explained at length the work of his museum, and to his relief found an able and attentive listener, a man who understood much more than he had

expected, of modern civilization. He found himself wondering if this ruler was, in reality, a thoroughly enlightened man who clung to the traditional medievalism of his people simply because the rank and file were not ready for civilization and were best impressed and held together by the ancient pageantry that smacked of the Dark Ages. For Martindale knew that Ras Tessayah gave mammoth raw-meat feasts every month to his retainers, gruesome outdoor banquets at which thousands of warriors gorged on dripping raw beef. He appeared before his people on state occasions arrayed in the bristling and outlandish lion-maned headdress of his forefathers. And Martindale knew that Ras Tessayah, or any other high Abyssinian chief for that matter, never stirred outside his *tukul* without an immense following of *zebanias*, retainers and vassals armed to the teeth parading at his heels.

Martindale asked for written permission, a general pass to travel anywhere in the kingdom, to be allowed to hunt animals and birds without restriction. Ras Tessayah turned to one of his attendants and gave an order in Amharic. The interpreter explained:

"He say you may go wherever you want in his country, except you mus' not go into the country of the Danakil, w'ich is part of his kingdom, but w'ich is verree dangerous from the Danakils, who are *kufanoo*"—bad—"men. You would be kill' in that part, and so you mus' not go there, he say."

"Tell him," said Martindale, "that if his pass would mean nothing to the Danakil savages, why, he needn't mind to include that part of his domains. If I go into the Danakil country, I do so at my own risk."

IN a long conversation with the interpreter, Ras Tessayah accompanied his words with lively gestures. Martindale knew that the regent was impressing upon the boy just how bad the Danakils were. The interpreter translated:

"He say there has never been a Feringi—w'ite man—go into the country of the Danakils. He say he do not send even the *zebanias*—the soldier who collect the taxes—into thi-is place. The Danakils are verree fierce, *kufanoo* men, and they will kill you surelee if you go there, for they have always kill' the Abyssinian', and if the Feringi go, he too will be speared."

"Tell him that I have no suicidal intentions and if anything should arise later

that could persuade me to enter the Danakil country, I will do so at my own risk and he shall not be held responsible by my government."

Ras Tessayah was plainly much relieved. He spoke in a low voice to one of the men behind his chair, and the interpreter explained:

"Now he has send to another *tukul*—'ouse—for the one who is give him all the advice. Thi-is one is al-so a Feringi."

Martindale was amazed to hear that Ras Tessayah had a white adviser, and he was again surprised at the quick entry of the man; surely he must have been just behind the cloth dividing the big room; Martindale wondered if the adviser had been listening all the time. He was a man of small frame, slender, and with hands and wrists as small as a woman's, smooth-shaven, and with oily black hair. His swift, gliding gait had something furtive in it. Martindale put him down as a Greek or Armenian, possibly an Egyptian; and there was a distinct air of untrustworthiness that, for no apparent reason, seemed to encompass him like an unholy aura. He was a type that Martindale distrusted on sight.

But he entered smiling, walked straight to Ras Tessayah and greeted him with a veiled sycophant smirk. In complexion the newcomer was slightly darker than the old ivory, Arab tint, of his master.

"Are you British or American?" he asked in perfect but curiously accented English, turning to Martindale. "My name is Trajanian—"

Ras Tessayah interrupted, to inform his adviser of the conversation that had taken place. The American thought this a waste of time; he did not doubt the Levantine had overheard every word.

"Ah, an American. We have great regard for your country here in Abyssinia."

Martindale, more to be polite than for any other reason, asked:

"What is your nationality?" His voice was gruffly challenging—although he had not meant to make it so. And the words, he knew, somehow revealed his instinctive aversion to the new arrival. But the man showed no evidence of having sensed the least antagonism.

"Oh, I?" he said, raising a graceful and very small hand and making an arc before his face, a gesture that was meant to give the impression of careless good nature. "Oh, I am one of those w'at you call men-without-a-country. I was born—oh, dear

now,"—and he seemed amusedly puzzled, "where was I born? On the Mediterranean. Yes, in one of those not-so-big countries along the blue Mediterranean. They are all alike!"

"I smell intrigue in that man like smoke in a burning house," thought Martindale.

RAS TESSAYAH appeared to relax the cold bearing of his official position.

"All parts of my country are not safe," he explained, Trajanian translating.

"We Abyssinians are surrounded by the colonies of three powerful European nations: France, England and Italy. They will not allow us to import arms or ammunition. The guns carried by my *zebanias* are old-fashioned, and we have few of them. The tribes in certain outlying parts of my domain are unruly; they do not always respect the boundary-lines of those colonies. It is impossible for me to keep order everywhere in my kingdom without modern arms and ammunition. When a small band of Abyssinian *shiftas*"—outlaws—"raid across the borders, those powerful civilized countries raise a big—w'at you say?—hue and cry about my inability to keep order in my kingdom. There are strong parties in those countries who would use such things as excuses to declare a protectorate and seize my country. They will not permit me to import arms through their territories. And I am surrounded and cut off from the sea. I cannot maintain peace and order without guns. What am I to do? I have no one to advise me whom I can trust—except Trajanian." And the worried chief of the Abyssinians patted the slim hand of the Levantine affectionately.

There were, Martindale thought, undoubtedly two aspects to the question, and he was not enough of a student of international affairs to take sides. But he appreciated the embarrassing position of this unhappy and patriotic ruler of a barbaric people. And when he glanced at the Levantine "adviser" with his suave, catlike motions, and his crafty air of intrigue, the Abyssinian regent received the American's unalloyed sympathy.

"We are working," the Levantine put in, smiling blandly, "to convince Europe of our good faith." "But," Martindale reflected, "as long as *you* are his right bower no European country will trust Ras Tessayah with so much as a popgun!" Aloud he said, however:

"Well, I hope you meet with more success than you have heretofore."

Martindale bowed and left the room. His written permission to travel through the country would be ready, the Ras had promised, within three or four days.

Trajanian overtook him, and they walked together past the chained lion.

"I will walk with you on the way to my little house," he said, slipping a confidential hand through Martindale's arm. "We do not see many whites here in Addis, and I am always what-you-call keen to hear of the outside world.

"The people in America," the Levantine continued carefully, feeling his way, "they are very much w'at you call—opposed—to the institution of slavery, I think, no?"

"We in America have no use for the practice of slavery," Martindale rejoined gruffly. And he added, "nor for those who carry it on elsewhere."

Trajanian beamed upon him; he had taken his cue and now spoke in a tone of brotherly confidence:

"Slavery is a very bad thing, yes. It is as old as Africa. But we are doing our best, here—Ras Tessayah and I—to abolish it forever. Menelik a long time ago forbade the raiding of slaves, and we hope sometime to liberate the slaves now in the country. It is a gr-reat matter of pride with me that I have been the first to suggest this to His Highness." And the bland smile beamed dazzlingly upon Martindale.

But somehow Martindale was not roused to enthusiasm by those sentiments. The words themselves were irreproachable, and the manner in which they had been uttered was frankly confidential; but the American for some reason found it lacking in the ability to inspire confidence.

THE Levantine changed the subject abruptly.

"You will make the collection of the dead animal, the bird," he went on engagingly, in his queer accent. "You like to do that?"

"It is my work," Martindale answered quietly. He could not shake off the feeling of distrust that the man's presence inspired. And he wondered by what insinuating methods Trajanian had wormed his way into the full confidence of Ras Tessayah.

"Do you make much money in your shooting work?" Trajanian asked with just a shade of disparagement in his tones.

"No," Martindale answered shortly.

But the Levantine appeared not to

notice the repulse in the tone. He went on, smiling and genial:

"You will trek far, maybe? These animals you hunt, they live far from Addis Ababa?"

"Oh, yes," said Martindale. He thought he might as well make the best of it and answer civilly any foolish questions the other might ask.

"What part of our country do you trek to first?" inquired Trajanian.

The American explained his route. But when he mentioned the far eastern point of his proposed trip and said: "After some weeks I expect to reach the eastern escarpment, where the Abyssinian highlands fall away to the low, hot plains, the edge of the Danakil country," his companion appeared deeply interested and even alarmed for the safety of Martindale's caravan.

"But, of course you cannot go into the Danakil country. And I should advise you not even to go near it," he said positively. "We should not like to have you butchered, you know."

"No need to worry," Martindale stated. He did not intend to allow this man to suspect his purpose. "I merely plan to do some of my collecting in the *direction* of the Danakil country, that's all."

"But I should not advise it." And then Trajanian gave Martindale information on a certain practice in vogue among the Danakils, a fashion of mutilating prisoners that Martindale thought almost as revolting as cannibalism. "It has been the custom of the Danakils from time immemorial to forbid their young men to take a woman until they have first killed a man. When a young warrior has done this, he brings certain portions of his victim's anatomy back with him to his village. . . . Ah, you have heard this?" Trajanian saw the fleeting look of disgust cross Martindale's face. "A very quaint custom, is it not?"

Martindale, like most men who have spent a large portion of their lives alone in the wilderness, was not talkative. He listened without comment while his companion babbled on easily and apparently with the best of intentions.

"The natives have reported to us that the Danakils are securing arms. A few years ago there was not one gun in the entire Danakil country. Now, it is said, there are a great many. We are much worried. We cannot get arms and ammunition here in Addis; the great powers will not

allow us to import them. The Danakils have always been bitter enemies of the Abyssinians, and if they should become well armed, it would be serious. His Highness does not know where these guns come from. He has protested to the French, the British and the Italians, for the munitions must come through their colonies. They have promised to do their best to put down the smuggling. But still the thing goes on unchecked. What are we to do? Our people cannot keep back Danakil raiders if they come armed with modern guns! I do not know what to think of it. It is what you call very bad business."

"Why doesn't the Ras send an army down into the Danakil country and clean up the place before it is too late?"

"Ah, but I am a man of peace," the Levantine smiled a righteous, holier-than-thou smile that was evidently meant to appear sincere, but which struck Martindale as highly hypocritical. "He has suggested that, but I am a man who abhors bloodshed, and I have counseled against it." He spoke like an oracle whose advice could not conceivably be disregarded.

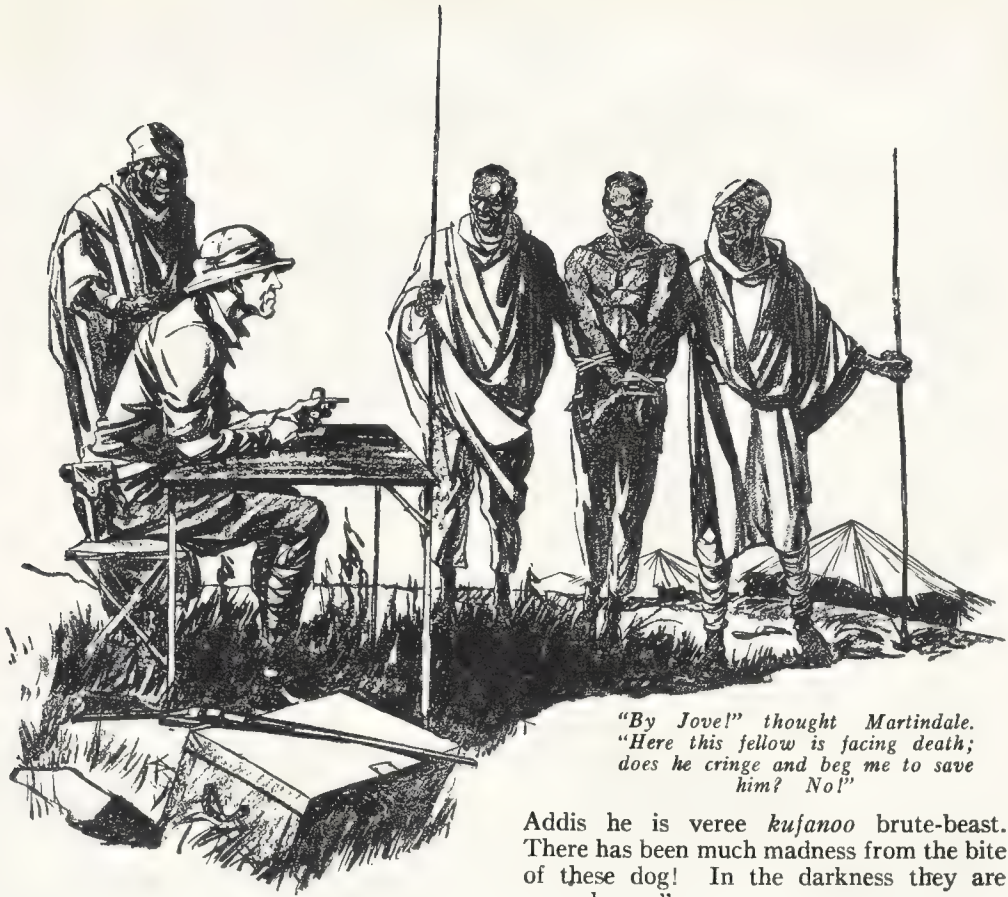
Martindale was blunt and plain-spoken. "Bosh!" he commented.

"Oh, but you do not understand," the other went on rapidly; "you do not know conditions here. There would be a serious strife. Many poor Abyssinians as well as Danakils would be murdered. I have impressed this on His Highness and we will do what you call watchful waiting."

MARTINDALE was disgusted. He took the pipe from his mouth and spoke his mind:

"Rot — nothing but sentimental rot! You know that arms are being smuggled to the enemies of Ras Tessayah's country! You know if it keeps up, the Danakils will soon cause serious trouble. Danakiland is a part of Ras Tessayah's dominions. You have not been able to stop the dangerous business by peaceable means. There is only one thing left to do, and the sooner Ras Tessayah does it, the better for all concerned. If you advise him against sending an army in there and nipping this thing in the bud, you are either a plain damn' fool, or a traitor to your adopted country!"

"But you do not understand!" Trajanian spoke soothingly, still in the best of spirits. Martindale had expected his straight-spoken words to rouse the man to anger or at least to end the discussion, but



*"By Jove!" thought Martindale.
"Here this fellow is facing death;
does he cringe and beg me to save
him? No!"*

the Levantine seemed proof against any insult. "No, you do not understand the way of these peoples. They are like children. We must not lead them into a bloody war. Ras Tessayah is as the father of his people. War is wrong," insisted Trajanian.

Martindale was not deeply interested in the affair. It was none of his business, anyway; he had spoken his piece—so when Trajanian lifted his helmet with exaggerated Eastern politeness at the next path leading down through a cluster of eucalyptus trees, he touched his own grudgingly and watched with relief the power behind the Abyssinian throne disappear on the way to his own dwelling.

THE sun had set, and the darkness had been gathering during their talk. The long shadows thrown by the trees that grew along the roads and footpaths of the town were rapidly blotting out objects at a short distance. Birhano, Martindale's interpreter, following behind, caught up; he handed his master a heavy stick.

"It is not safe to walk in the dark without the club," he remarked. "The dog of

Addis he is verree *kufanoo* brute-beast. There has been much madness from the bite of these dog! In the darkness they are verree brave."

The American took the club, swinging it carelessly.

"Why don't they kill off a few thousands of these *pi*-dogs and make the town safe after dark?" Martindale asked. He had wondered before about this fact. He liked dogs, but he had no use whatever for the mangy and vicious canines that infested the Abyssinian capital and made the nights hideous with their howls—wolf-like, slinking brutes that kept out of sight during the day but came in droves to forage through the streets after dark, an actual menace to life and limb.

Birhano explained:

"The Feringi of Ras Tessayah, the man w'at jus' go home, he is verree good man. He do not like to see nothing be kill'. He is say God do not like that. Oh, he is verree good man, I think."

So Trajanian professed to be against the killing of anything, even vermin!

"He's an out-and-out fraud, or I miss my guess," Martindale remarked.

"Yes," remarked Birhano, not understanding, "he is verree good man."

As they walked on slowly the usual eve-

ning howls were ascending from various parts of the town. But suddenly from a short distance to the right, the direction taken by the Levantine, Martindale heard a terrific uproar of savage baying.

"A big troop of dogs must have found a carcass," he remarked; "they're fighting over something." And then a wild cry, blood-curdling in its sharp terror, rose above the pandemonium.

MARTINDALE, grasping his club firmly, ran back to the wooded path, turned into it and came upon a mob of forty or fifty of the snarling, hungry brutes, and he saw that in the midst of that dangerous circle stood Trajanian, kicking, yelling and stumbling in his terrified efforts to keep the savage animals from knocking him off his feet.

With a loud yell Martindale charged down upon the outer circle, Birhano at his heels. He laid about him with his club, disabling two or three and scattering the rest with the suddenness of his attack. They slunk off through the trees, growling and showing teeth, a surly and vicious pack.

Panting from his exertions, he reached Trajanian. "Why, I'd no idea they'd actually attempt to *eat* a full-grown man!" he cried.

The Levantine's face was white as chalk. His trouser-legs were torn in several places, and his coat had been ripped up the back. One of his hands showed the blue marks of canine fangs, and Martindale saw small drops of blood well from the wound and trickle off the middle finger. The Levantine leaned against a eucalyptus tree, exhausted from his terrific efforts to keep the pack at bay, and from the shock of a very real fright. He was too badly shaken by his recent experience to speak. He leaned against the tree panting, shoulders drooping and body limp as a bundle of wet clothes. The man had been completely terrified, and his eyes were cloudy with a look of haunted fear. He had indeed been nearer death during the past three minutes than he had ever been before, and the experience had worked havoc with his nerves.

"Come on!" Martindale recognized the symptoms of shattered nerve. "We'll go on to your house. I'll see you safe home."

Trajanian stumbled along between Martindale and Birhano, casting apprehensive glances now and then at the slinking shadows making off through the trees. He was in an abject state, and Martindale felt

his dislike for the man increase. A certain amount of reaction was only natural, the American thought, but this excess of weakness was nothing less than cowardice.

"Why didn't you climb a tree?" Martindale flung back over his shoulder.

"There was no time," the fear-stricken Levantine replied.

"Well, then why didn't you break off a branch, grab yourself a stout club?"

"I—I—I was too startled. It happened too—what-you-say—sud-denly."

"Humph!" His rescuer grunted. He wanted to say good-night to this man and get back to his own quarters. But Trajanian insisted that he come in when they reached the house. Martindale found it to be but a slight improvement on the ordinary Abyssinian *tukul*. The roof was conical and high-peaked, made of thatch, but there were three rooms and an outhouse or kitchen connected by a low roof of grass.

The Levantine had somewhat recovered his composure when they arrived, and with his usual exaggerated politeness stood aside and motioned Martindale to enter.

"This, you will see, is my modest little dwelling. I am not a rich man. I am like you—Ma-artindale—I do not care for the money. Your work is to collect the animal and the bird. Mine is to give of my best advice to His Highness—and for that I do not have much money. It is enough to know that I am doing what you call the good works."

A very pretty speech, thought Martindale, the words of an idealist. There were several men of his acquaintance, at home, good men, who practiced such altruism; but here, for some reason, these expressions of principles seemed hypocritical. Martindale felt more than ever that Trajanian was a *poseur*, pure and simple. He thought:

"If all this is true, and he is the idealist he makes himself out to be, I've learned nothing about human nature." But he decided to humor him and to conduct himself as if he took every word Trajanian said as gospel truth. So he rejoined:

"That is a noble sentiment, Trajanian. You are evidently one man in a thousand." He glanced at his host, expecting his sarcasm to be understood. He was surprised, however, to see the Levantine's face wreathed in a beaming smile, and to hear him expostulate in a deprecatory voice:

"Oh, no! My dear sir, it is nothing. I am simply one of those ones who does not care for money. I sometimes think it is

not my fault if I am, what-you-say, altruistic. It is only that I have more of the pleasure in the good works, than in the big house, the gold and precious stone. Ah, hah! That is from the Bible, I think, no?" And Trajanian, now recovered from the shock of his late terror, laughed with apparent heartiness. "And now you must stay with me for dinner—oh, but I insist. You have done a gr-eat service to me, Mr. Mar-rtindale—and to His Highness."

TRAJANIAN would take no refusal, and they entered the house together. The dwelling was commonplace enough, built and furnished after the fashion of the usual Abyssinian dwelling of the better class. The furniture had been made by hand of cedar and fastened with rawhide instead of screws and nails. The rooms were partitioned off merely by cotton draperies hanging from the rafters. On the floor, Martindale was surprised to note, were several very fine Persian or Arab rugs. An old Abyssinian servant came and went like a tottering specter, silent and incurious. He laid the table in the next room, and after a few moments' delay pulled aside the curtain and announced that the meal was ready.

Trajanian was the soul of geniality. He insisted that his guest make himself at home, and with his constant small attentions and insistences, his incessant conversation and troublesome and exaggerated solicitude, bored Martindale not a little. The American was preoccupied with his plans for early departure from the capital, and answered his host's conversation by a nod or a noncommittal, "Yes" or "No."

Toward the end of the long meal the old servant came in from the rear of the house and stood in the doorway, fumbling with his *shamma* in a hesitant way. Martindale happened to be sitting in a position facing the servant, and he watched him in his efforts to catch his master's eye. The man acted as if he had embarrassing news—something he did not want the guest to hear. Martindale was amused. "Perhaps," he thought, "there is no more wine, or the dessert burned up or something." Trajanian at length noticed the old man's signals and rose softly with a bow and a polite excuse. The two disappeared into the kitchen. Voices floated in almost at once—vehement words in a strange language, but an expression that Martindale took to be one of caution was uttered by the Levantine, and the voices became low and in-

audible. In a few minutes Trajanian was back; his excuses were profuse.

"You must pardon, my friend. It is not nice, these interruptions. But I have so much to do. The cares of state,"—he smiled in the self-sufficient manner of a man whose good deeds are so habitual and multitudinous that they give him no rest,— "they are very impor-tant. I am busy day and night. But this matter, although it is very urgent, must wait until we are finished. I must allow nothing to interfere with the entertainment of my good friend and benefactor—your health, Mar-rtindale."

The speech was plainly a suggestion to leave, and Martindale was glad to avail himself of it. Rising, he bowed, copying the excessively polite air of his host: "I should never forgive myself, Mr. Prime Minister, if, through me, grave affairs of state should be neglected." He chuckled inwardly but concluded with outward solemnity: "A mere common person like myself has no right to encroach upon the valuable time of one who holds the destinies of nations within the palm of his hand. I must say good-night."

AS he called Birhano, who had been waiting outside, and went down the path through the trees, Martindale laughed quietly at the recollection of the man's reply.

"Ah, it is too bad! My dear sir, I am desolated at this intrusion upon our so nice evening. But the public man—the one of what-you-call the inner circle—cannot claim his life for his own. Ah, no. One at the helm of affairs belongs to the people. I am no longer my own man." And Trajanian had heaved a sigh of affected resignation. "I sometimes think I am too devoted to my patron and my adopted country."

And the American, as he continued down the path swinging the club that Birhano again placed in his hands, mused aloud:

"I never saw it to fail: give a near-Easterner a little authority, a position of trust, and he swells to the bursting point. And then—he betrays you. Now, I wonder just what Trajanian's lay is? He's entirely too altruistic to be true."

Martindale slowed up and turned.

"Who were those men who came to the kitchen, Birhano?"

"I do not know, Gaytah" (Master). "They were not of thi-is country. They were of far away, I think. They were talk the Arabic of a kind w'ich I do not know much.

They are say something of a boat w'at go in the water, and they are speak of the slave and of a sheik—I do not know w'at it is they are say, for I do not know but a little of those words they are talking."

"Queer they should come to the house after dark," Martindale thought, "when no native is allowed on the streets of Addis Ababa without a special permit issued by Ras Tessayah or Trajanian, perhaps. Must have been urgent business." He dismissed the matter from his mind, however. There was much to be done in the next day or two in the way of preparation before his caravan would be ready to leave.

CHAPTER III

TWO weeks later Martindale sat in his folding camp-chair in front of his tent. Before him stood the Shum, or head-man, of the village just beyond the hill. A short distance away the Shum's bodyguard waited, a dozen bearded, spear-carrying Abyssinians. Martindale put his question concisely to the interpreter:

"Describe this strange animal, its general appearance."

Birhano spoke at length in Amharic. The Shum answered readily, even eagerly, and it was plain by his face that he was telling what he sincerely believed to be the truth.

"He say," Birhano turned and translated, "he say thi-is thing is so big as the *ambassa*—the lion. Thi-is brute-beast have the mane—the long hair on the neck like the *ambassa*. But the head—the face—is not like the head of the lion. He say it is like the head of the big dog *jingaro*" (baboon). "Oh, it is ver-ee fierce, ver-ee *kufanoo*, is this beast, he say."

The intriguing rumor of a strange and as yet unclassified animal had cropped up again and again. At first Martindale had been skeptical to the point of scoffing. For he was well aware of the unreliability of native rumor. But the report was persistent. At almost every village he had heard of the strange animal, and most of the legends agreed upon certain basic points. The idea of discovering a new large animal at this late day and age sent the blood pulsing through his veins with a pounding eagerness he had not known since that eventful day three years before when he had stumbled upon an ancient ruined city of the Mayas in Central America. He often thought of that fortunate episode with a

chuckle; it had overturned some very pretty theories of the anthropologists; it had given rise to others and split the specialists in that branch of science into two camps. But anthropology was not Martindale's specialty. He had given his valuable discovery to the world and had passed on, laboring in the more congenial field of African zoölogy.

"Ask him if he has ever seen the tracks of this animal," he ordered Birhano.

After a short palaver the young interpreter replied:

"The foot-track of thi-is *kufanoo owrie*" (fierce beast) "is ver-ee big. It is round, like the track of the *jeeb*—the hyena—but more big—and w'en thi-is thing roar, it is like the roar of the *ambassa*—so loud that it is heard for one day's march away. Oh, it is ver-ee fierce, and he say it is called the *jingassa*. It is called thi-is name because it is look like to be one part *jingaro* and one part *ambassa*, and he say it is never found all alone, but it come in the big troop—many all together."

It was clear by this time that the Shum had never seen the animal himself, but was retailing mere rumor as so many others had done. Martindale was keen to find some one who had actually seen the beast.

"Ask him if he knows any man who has ever seen this animal with his own eyes?"

"There is no man who has seen it, he say," answered the interpreter, "because w'en the *jingassa* come near enough for the man to see, he always rush for the man, and the man is sure-lee to be eaten up. So that is w'y there is no one who has seen this *kufanoo jingassa*."

"Bosh!" said Martindale with disgust. But he smiled in spite of himself.

"Have him explain then how he is able to describe its appearance, if no one has ever seen it and lived to tell the tale? That'll make him think a little."

"He has heard all this from his father."

"Just as I thought," muttered Martindale, lighting his pipe. Then to himself he summed up: "That description might be applied to the gelada baboon, which certainly has a mane like a lion. Still, the gelada's feet are ape feet, not round like the hyena. And the gelada is not as large as a lion. But native exaggeration might easily account for that difference in size. The habit of running in large packs sounds not unlike the African hunting-dog. But *he* has no mane, and is even smaller than the hyena."



The second shot had no more apparent effect than the first. Martindale realized that nothing but a head shot would stop the lioness in time.

"Ask him one more question," ordered Martindale. "Where does this *kufanoo owerie* hang out? Suppose the Shum wanted to hunt the *jingassa*—where would he go to find it?"

There was a long conversation in Amharic, accompanied by many gestures. The Shum pointed to the eastward with his spear, thrusting out chin and lower lip and snapping the fingers of his left hand to denote a long distance.

Birhano translated:

"Oh, it is ver-ee far w'ere the *jingassa* live. He say you mus' go down into the country of the Danakils, and he say, if the *jingassa* do not eat you first, then the Danakils they will sure-lee spear you, but they will not eat you because it is not their custom to eat the meat from men."

"That's some consolation, anyway," Martindale admitted dryly. "Well, we'll not get excited over a flock of rumors that a half-naked savage has heard years ago from his father. It is finished." And Martindale entered his tent.

"No," observed the interpreter with relief, talking to his master's broad back, "we cannot go w'ere the Danakils live. No one can go there. The Danakils like ver-ee much to kill men. We should all be speared, for the young warrior mus' first kill some one and bring home some pieces before he can take the woman he wants."

MARTINDALE had by this time heard enough to be fully convinced that no Abyssinian, or white man either, for that matter, had ever penetrated to the heart of

Danakiland and returned. This fact alone was enough to stimulate the most lethargic imagination. He had already accomplished much of real and lasting benefit to the science of zoölogy on this trip. Now, he thought, if by a stroke of gratuitous luck he should bring out an entirely new species of large animal, something on the order of this half-mythical "*jingassa*" with its baboon's head, lion-mane and giant hyena legs, there would be no telling what light might be shed upon the origin of all three of those common animals. Such a find might easily prove as valuable to zoölogy as his discovery of the ruined Maya city far away in Central America had been to anthropology.

But Martindale's scientifically trained mind was deeply skeptical. His knowledge of the vague indefiniteness and extreme unreliability of native rumor backed up this unbelief. He weighed the evidence calmly during the next few days, but decided that the reports of the new animal were too fantastic to be true. But regardless of that—what satisfaction to be first to explore that unknown land!

And then befell one of those coincidental happenings, one of those chance occurrences that make this world so uncertain—and so interesting. One morning, a little before noon, the caravan approached a village perched upon the edge of the giant escarpment, the eastern bulwark of the great Abyssinian highlands. The plateau ended as sharply as if cloven by a Titan's knife. Five thousand feet below, the desert reached as far as the eye could follow toward the rising sun—a magnificent spectacle.

"It is the northern end of the great Rift valley," Martindale said, more to himself than to the interpreter beside him.

Birhano pointed far across that yellow waste.

"The country of the Danakils," he announced impressively, "w'ere no Feringi has ever been. And w'ere we Abyssinians do not go, because the Danakils will kill us wi-ith the spear. It is verree *kufanoo*, that place."

Martindale waited for his caravan to catch up, then mounted his riding-mule, and they arrived at the village on the edge of the escarpment as the powerful sun was nearing the zenith.

Behind the village, he was surprised to see, were great herds of cattle and goats held under close guard in the immediate vicinity of the grass-roofed *tukuls*. Natives crowded before a large hut, and much haranguing and argument was in progress. Birhano went ahead to speak with the village Shum, to advise him of the importance of the white man and to assure him that the visit was friendly, and that the Feringi had a writing from Ras Tessayah giving full permission to travel and hunt in the country.

MARTINDALE led the caravan to a suitable camping place far enough from the village to be out of range of curious crowds and thieving villagers. Within a half hour Birhano, much excited, escorted the village Shum to Martindale's tent. The American was busy skinning a Battaleur eagle that he had been fortunate enough to shoot on the march. It was a curious bird, with a short rudimentary tail, enormous wing-spread, red beak and red eyes and short, powerful red legs. It was the only Battaleur he had secured, and he hurried to get the skin off and salted before it should spoil. He did not relish the idea of interrupting his work to go through the formalities with this local chief, but in Abyssinia such things must be attended to with all seriousness.

"O Gaytah, they have catch, in the village, a Danakil! There was las' night a mos' terrible attack. The Danakils—oh, verree many, so many the Shum do not know to count that many—made the rush into the village w'ile it was the darkness of night. They spear' three men. They howl—oh, the Shum say it was very bad the way they howl. And the Danakils have stolen many women from the village, and w'at is much worse, they have stolen the *buckalow*—the

mule—of the Shum, w'ich he say was the bes' mule in all the country. He do not know w'at he will do wi-ithout thi-is *buckalow*, because it was so big and so strong."

"Humph!" Martindale grunted, nodding to the village chief. "Maybe he thinks I'll give him a mule to make up for the one he lost, eh?"

"He say something like that w'en I tell him you are a gr-r-eat sahib. But I do not think you mus' give him the *buckalow*, because he is not a chief of much greatness. And now he is go back to his village to watch the Danakil be speared."

"So they caught one of the raiders, did they?" Martindale was only casually interested. "Well, it'll teach him a lesson." The white man did not intend to mix up in the crude and swift eye-for-an-eye Abyssinian justice. Judging from all he had heard of the Danakils and their tactics, the Abyssinians were perfectly justified in putting to death all those ebullient brigands they could catch. Then an idea occurred to him. He rose and called one of his *zebanias*, or camp guards. Turning to the interpreter, he said:

"Tell him to bring the case of rum to my tent. Now listen, Birhano—get what I say. I have an idea we can learn more of this *jingassa* animal from that captured Danakil. Tell the Shum to come here. We'll show him a little attention."

Birhano was surprised at this condescension of his master.

"But he is onlee the Shum of this village, Gaytah. He is not a verree big man. It is wasting the rum."

"That's all right. We have plenty, and I want to talk with that Danakil."

THE village dignitary was ushered into the tent, seated upon a bed-roll, and the skinning-table was cleared. The rum box was opened, and a bottle set out. The Shum was duly impressed, and his large escort, standing before the tent, whispered among themselves. To show a petty chief such honors is the straightest way to his favor.

Martindale expressed sympathy over the loss of the raided women, but the Shum waved a careless hand.

"He say," Birhano translated, "that onlee thirty women were carried away. There are many more women. But he say he can never fin' another mule like the big one w'ich they steal from him. He think it will take two common *buckalows* to fill the place of that mule in his hear-r-rt."

"Oh, I don't give a hoot about his mule," Martindale cut in impatiently. "Ask him why they didn't follow the Danakils and get the plunder back."

"He say it was, oh, verree dark in the night-time w'en they come. Nobody know how many Danakils are there. They were all aroun' the village. There was much yells, and everyone run into the thorn-bush. —I do not think this Shum is very good fighter," Birhano commented on the side. "I think he is like the old woman."

For a few minutes the American cultivated the Shum carefully—condoled, flattered and finally, after three applications of rum, sent Birhano back to the village with the Shum to fetch the captured Danakil.

WITH the captive's appearance Martindale was greatly impressed. His hands were bound with rawhide strips, and each arm was securely lashed to the arm of a sturdy villager. But the free and untamed spirit of the captive shone in his eyes, and Martindale was surprised to see that the Arab strain was much more predominant than it was in the Abyssinian race. The Danakils, he thought, must be descended from the same Hamitic parent stock as the Somalis, and almost undiluted with negro blood. The early Abyssinian practice of raiding the Bantu tribes of the interior for slaves, he knew, accounted for the darker color of the average Abyssinian. It was probable that the Danakils, on the other hand, had always been too far removed from the interior to raid the negro districts. And Martindale was convinced of the truth of reports that Danakils used exclusively captured Somalis as slaves. This practice had preserved the race from that degenerating mixture of negro blood that had worked such havoc with the Egyptians and most north African Arabs. Judging from this magnificent specimen, the Danakils, although an African tribe since prehistoric times, had completely avoided the lowering mixture of Bantu.

"Ask him," said Martindale, "if there is, in his country, any fierce, *kufanoo* animal besides the lion, the leopard and the hyena." He was far too experienced to describe the so-called *jingassa* first and then to ask if such an animal was to be found in Danakiland. The answer then would be, "Yes," for it is almost universal native habit to tell the white man what he wants to hear.

The prisoner understood little Amharic, so the question was put in a sort of bastard

Arabic, a lingua-franca that does very well throughout northeast Africa. Martindale was impressed by the straightforwardness of the man's reply.

"He say," repeated Birhano, "that there is, in his country, a very fierce brute-beast w'ich is called by the Abyssinians *jingassa*, but w'ich I cannot say how it is called in his words. It is so big as a young camel, he say."

"That doesn't mean anything. It might be as large as a six-months camel colt—or a day-old foal," Martindale interrupted.

"He say it is almost so big as the *ambassa*, the lion. The head of this brute-beast is wide, and the nose is long like the baboon, he say. It is roar sometimes like the *ambassa* and then sometimes it is cry like the lit-tle child w'en he is want some milk. The *jingassa* is not afraid for the *ambassa*, he say, because the *jingassa* is al-ways run in the big pack. Three *jingassa* is enough for kill one *ambassa*." Then Birhano gave his own idea on this point:

"But I do not believe three *jingassa* can fight the lion, for the lion is so strong he—" Martindale cut the boy off: "I don't care what you think, and I know all about how strong the lion is! Get on with the story."

"Well, he say, in some place w'ere he live is big swamp. There is much *owrie* there—*zohon*" (elephant), "*goshe*" (buffalo), "*argazin*" (kudu), "*defassa*" (waterbuck), "oh, and much more kind of *owrie* is there too, he say. The *jingassa* is live there, and he eat the meat from those *owrie*. He do not creep upon them like the *nebur*" (leopard), "but he run after the *owrie*, and w'en he is tired, another *jingassa* come and run in his place." And again Birhano volunteered his own guess at this. "But I do not believe w'at he is say. I do not think—"

Martindale had to interfere again.

"Never mind what you think—I'll be the judge."

"Well, he say the *ambassa* is almos' never come any more to thi-is big swamp because the *jingassa* chase away the *ambassa*. But I think this is damn' lie—" And then Birhano, seeing his master's eye, recovered the thread of his translation hastily.

"He say there is nobody live near thi-is big swamp because of the *jingassa* and al-so the fever; much fever there—he say."

A HOST of villagers had followed the Shum with his retainers and their prisoner, and now stood watching curiously

from the edge of camp. They were thirsting for Danakil blood, Martindale knew, and he was well aware that Abyssinian law—or rather ancient custom that took the place of law—demanded a punishment corresponding literally to the crime committed. The prisoner would certainly meet his end on the points of those gleaming spears, exactly as the three villagers had been killed by the raiders. There was something grim and inexorable in that eye-for-an-eye justice that Martindale admitted had its advantages over civilized law-courts top-heavy with technicalities and delays.

When Martindale had arranged for the captive to be brought before him, he had no other purpose in mind than to extract all the information possible regarding the Danakil country and the existence of the rumored *jingassa*. There was no trace of the proselyting reformer or the idealistic missionary in Martindale's scientifically trained mind. He had no intention of interfering with Abyssinian justice; in his off-hand opinion, the Danakils undoubtedly deserved anything the Abyssinians gave in the way of punishment or retaliation.

The interpreter stated after a further conversation in which the captive showed no hesitation or uncertainty in his answers:

"He say—" (Martindale was accustomed to the inevitable "he say's" of Birhano's translations; the frequent and boring repetitions had long ago lost their power to arouse his impatience.)

"He say he have heard of the gr-eat magic of the Feringies, and he say he do not believe it is true. He say he have heard the Somali captive tell that Feringies can go in the sky like the *amora*" (the vulture), "but he say he think this is damn' lie."

Martindale was surprised at the unflinching independence of the man; here he stood, firm, unafraid, daring to go out of his way to hurl the lie in the face of the one person in all that hostile assemblage who might, possibly, have been his friend in the hour of dire need!

"Tell him that is no lie," instructed Martindale. "Say the Feringies are capable of anything with their strong magic."

BIRHANO repeated this, and the white man watched the face of the Danakil with great interest. It showed scornful disbelief. The man made a striking figure with his bushy hair standing out straight from his head somewhat in the fashion of

the Hadendowa, or "fuzzy-wuzzy" of the Sudan, and Martindale thought it quite probable that the Danakil tribe had been, at some remote period, a rebellious offshoot of that wild Arabic fighting-stock. The prisoner's body from the waist up was nude and showed the finely drawn proportions of the unmixed Arab. The legs had not the exaggerated length of those of the average Abyssinian, and there was no trace of the lean shank and protruding heel characteristic of races in which flowed much negro blood. The skin was light chocolate brown, shades lighter than that of most Abyssinians. But the calm, defiant eyes held the attention.

"A magnificent race, the Danakils," commented Martindale to himself.

Birhano translated the savage's comment on flying:

"If the Feringi can make so much magic as to go in the sky like the *amora*, he say, then let the Feringi call upon his gods to strike off the rawhide binding his arms, and if Gaytah can do this, he say, he will show you a fight with thees ones who now guard him that will make the heart of Gaytah verree glad to see. But, he say, he do not believe Gaytah can do this, and he think w'at you say about the Feringies going in the sky like the *amora* is one damn' big lie—" And Birhano here took occasion to put himself on record as lending no endorsement to the sentiments he was quoting. "Oh, he is verree bad man—*kufanoo multo*—thi-is Danakil *shifta*."

But Martindale was delighted with the man's reply. He smiled appreciatively.

"By Jove!" he thought. "This fellow is one of those rare beings, an honest man with the courage of his convictions. Here he is, facing death; does he cringe and beg me to save him? Does he bother even to conciliate me by agreeing to what he thinks is a lie—as ninety-nine out of a hundred natives would? No. He spurns such weak conduct! By the Lord Harry, I believe I'll save that fellow."

Martindale addressed Birhano carefully, weighing his words impressively:

"Birhano, bring the Shum in here again and sit him down. Now, I want you to repeat my words just as I say them. None of your own ideas—understand? All right. Tell the Shum that I have decided to purchase this captive."

Birhano smiled incredulously with a certain air of condescension for his master's denseness:

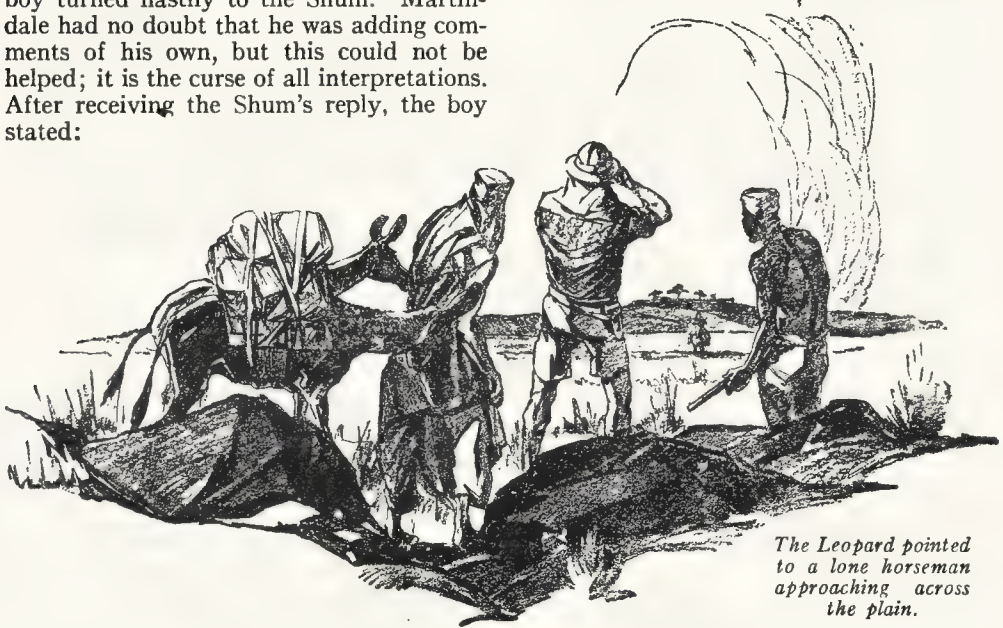
"Oh, but Gaytah cannot do that! The Shum and the people of the village—they would not sell the Danakil. He mus' die on the spear—"

"Birhano!" Martindale hit the skinning-table with his fist. "When will you learn to do as I order? How many times do I have to tell you that I don't want your opinions? Now repeat what I told you!"

"Ow, Gaytah!" (Yes, Master!) The boy turned hastily to the Shum. Martindale had no doubt that he was adding comments of his own, but this could not be helped; it is the curse of all interpretations. After receiving the Shum's reply, the boy stated:

memory of the raid was too fresh in their minds. Then Martindale had an inspiration.

"Explain this: I am here in this country to kill and collect specimens of animals and birds." And while that was being translated, Martindale pulled from under his cot a box of kudu skins, dried and salted. He spread them on the tent floor-cloth. From another box he brought forth a book on taxidermy. He explained:



The Leopard pointed to a lone horseman approaching across the plain.

"He say jus' w'at I know he will say. He will not sell the Danakil." This was announced with a decided air of self-vindication, in a voice of annoying I-told-you-so.

"Of course. It's just what I expected. Now tell him that I am prepared to pay a good price for this Danakil. I will give two mules, good mules, to replace the one run off by the raiders. See what he says to that."

The Shum's face, when he realized that the white man was in earnest, showed surprise and deep disapproval.

"Yellum" (No), "he say. He will never sell thi-is Danakil. He say the Danakil *shifta* mus' die on the spear. There is no use, Gaytah—"

"Will you dry up?" Again Martindale's fist hit the table. Birhano bowed submissively and remained silent. Martindale turned the problem over in his mind. It was clear that the Shum and his people were too set upon the man's death to listen even to the powerful voice of greed. The

"In my country the people do not know what animals live in Abyssinia. I kill these animals and preserve their skins. When I return to my country, these dried skins are prepared and mounted, softened and stretched upon bodies of wood and clay. When finished, they look like the real live animals. Then the people in my country may see just how the *owrie*"—game animals—"of your country look when alive."

THE Shum received this information with a polite smile of incredulity. But when Martindale opened the book to an illustration showing a finished museum group of kudu, the breath whistled through the old man's teeth and he muttered an astonished:

"Argazin!"

"Yes," Martindale went on, "*argazin*—greater kudu. And here are more—*defassa*, *wonderbee*, *zohon*. Now, my people have heard much of the ferocity of the Danakils. But they have never seen a Danakil. They do not know if the Danakil savages are

black, white or red. They do not know even if they have one eye or two—they do not know if the Danakils are like the *jingaro*—the baboon—or like men. How can they when they are so far away and have never seen one? I want to show my people just how bad the Danakils are. Therefore, I will buy this Danakil, not to use as a slave, but to kill and skin as I do the animals, so when I get back to my own country I can mount his pelt." Martindale looked straight in the Shum's eyes without a flicker of amusement. And when he saw hesitation in the eyes, he continued: "And for this I am willing to pay two fine *buckalows*."

The Shum had a happy idea: "It is good. I will spear this Danakil, and sell you the skin for two *buckalows*. It is cheap."

Martindale had a ready answer:

"The skin of any animal—or man—killed today is not good. The moon is too full—too big. A skin to be mounted must be taken when the moon is not full. You do not know about these things, but I do. It is my work to know about skins. I will, therefore, not shoot this Danakil for three—maybe four—days, until the moon is right."

But this project of allowing the captive to be taken away for slaughter at a later date did not appeal to the Shum. He pointed out that his people would be deprived of the exquisite pleasure and satisfaction of witnessing the bloody spectacle.

Martindale agreed that this was, indeed, a serious drawback, and one that he was willing to pay handsomely to overcome. Holding in his hand an extra shotgun, doubly valuable in native eyes because of its weight and large bore, he expressed willingness to throw it in with the two mules. A double handful of Number Eight shot shells clinched the bargain. And to the great disgust of Birhano and the alarm of Martindale's *zebanias* and caravan men, the Danakil became the property of the white man. Martindale lost no time, but ordered camp to be moved at once. His new purchase must be removed from the scene; revengeful villagers might disapprove of the cupidity of their Shum.

CHAPTER IV

THE next afternoon Martindale had a long talk with his prisoner. The man's attitude had undergone a change. The in-

domitable bearing was the same; the eyes still burned steadily and fearlessly beneath the bushy mop of hair, and the same dignity and aloofness were apparent. But there was now a question, an inquiring gleam in the eyes that had not been present before. Martindale knew that the savage could not comprehend why his life had been saved, why the Feringi had purchased him at such an extravagant price.

Birhano's disapproval was apparent in every glance cast in the direction of the savage. Martindale, after hearing much apparently conclusive evidence of the existence of some unknown and important animal, was ready to let the Danakil go back to his own people.

"Tell him," he began, "that the white man's medicine is all-powerful. The Feringi can indeed go through the sky like the *amora*—the vulture. Ask him if he remembers what he said to me yesterday when I told him of this. He said: 'If the Feringi can make so much magic as to go in the air like the *amora*, then let him call upon his gods to strike off the rawhide binding my arms.' I will now do this—and the prisoner may go back to his own people. He is a brave man; he did not cringe and beg me to interfere. For that he can have his life." And Martindale took his skinning-knife, and to the horror of the caravan men, deliberately cut the rawhide strips binding the Danakil's arms. He expected the man to dart into the thornbush like a jackal. But he did not move.

"Birhano, tell him to help himself to what meat he wants from that reeduck I shot today. And then he can go. He is a brave man, and for that I make him a present of his life with my compliments." Martindale moved his camp chair inside the tent, let the front flap fall to keep out the late afternoon sun, and sat down to the folding table to begin work on his notes. Ten minutes later he was writing: "*Oribi gallarum*, male, unusually long hair upon knees, color light tan, white undersides—"

Birhano scratched on the tent.

"Thi-is Danakil—" And Martindale saw as the tent-flap was lifted, the ex-captive standing in the spot where he had been when the bonds were cut ten minutes before. "He say," went on the interpreter with infinite scorn in his voice, "that he will not go back to his *tukul*. He say you have buy him from the Shum. He is now belong to you. He will stay here and do w'at you want, he say." And then Birhano

broke out in a torrent of condemnation: "I tell him to go 'way. I say we 'ave no use for Danakil. I say if he do not go, Gaytah will come out with the big *taban-jah*, the gun, w'ich go '*Boom-boom!*' and kill him and take off the skin to salt and hang up. Thi-is Danakil, he say to me in the Arabic, w'at is call in your talk, 'Go to 'ell!' Oh, he is verree *kufanoo*, thi-is Danakil. I think if we shoot him it is a good job, that is w'at I think."

MARTINDALE ruminated on the strange quirks of the savage mind.

"Bring him here. Now, Birhano, forget your hatred and translate accurately what I say. Tell him that I have gotten information of his country and the *jingassa* from him, which is all I wanted. Now he may go back to his own people."

Birhano palavered with the Danakil, then turned, hatred and disgust in his face:

"H'e is verree bad man. He say he is belong to you and he think I tell the lie w'en I repor-rt w'at you say. He do not believe you want him to go 'way from here to his own *tukul*. He say he will push the spear inside my rib sometime—oh, he is verree savage man, thi-is one. I think we mus' shoot him, Gaytah. I think there is not any other way." Birhano was seriously alarmed at the captive's cool threat and calm determined manner.

The savage plucked Birhano's arm and spoke in a rapid but quiet voice. The interpreter shook the hand from his arm as if the touch had been contaminating:

"He say if Gaytah will come to the country of the Danakils, he will show him the *jingassa*." And the youthful interpreter made haste to add: "It is the trick to get us into that place. Oh, he would kill us all w'en he got to his frien's in the Danakil country and they would have our *taban-jahs*."

Birhano was plainly scornful of such a transparent ruse. But Martindale silently gazed through the tent door. He saw the flat yellow plains stretching eastward below the great escarpment. *Terra Incognita*—unknown land! No white man had ever penetrated it. What important discoveries might be lying beyond the rim of the far horizon? It was, perhaps, the last big opportunity for a zoölogist. This might be the auspicious occasion, the favorable chance for which he had been hoping. But Martindale was wise in the untrustworthiness of savages.

"Tell him that we know all about the Danakil practice of spearing every stranger that enters their country. Say that no white man would be allowed to go far before he would be killed. Make it clear that we understand these things, and ask him why he considers us simple-minded enough to follow him to certain death."

Birhano translated this with gusto. It was exactly in line with his own feelings, and he put plenty of vehemence into the words. The interpreter did not suspect the secondary motives of his master, however, and he gave the Danakil's reply in a voice of infinite scorn:

"He say he is the son of the *aboona*—the head priest. He say his people will not spear us w'en he tell them we 'ave save his life. Oh, he say much more, but he is damn' liar like all Danakils. He would steal the guns at night and shoot us the verree first time he have the chance."

Martindale had an idea:

"Take him away, Birhano, and bring him back when I call. Drop the tent-flap." And when alone, he took a pair of small pliers from his box of skinning-tools, extracted the copper-jacketed bullets from two cartridges and poured the powder on the ground. Then he replaced the bullets in the empty brass shells. When Birhano returned with the savage, Martindale picked up the big double-barreled cordite rifle.

"Tell him that he is to carry this gun," he began, highly amused at the scandalized expression, a look of open-mouthed wonder, that shone on Birhano's countenance. "I will take him for a short hunt. He is to act as my gunbearer." And before the horrified eyes of the interpreter, Martindale calmly opened the heavy gun and thrusting in the two cartridges, placed it in the Danakil's hand. And before Birhano could recover from the shock of what he took to be a fatal piece of insane recklessness, Martindale lifted his light rifle from the corner of the tent and marched out the tent door. "I'll test him," he flung over his shoulder. "If he wants to kill me, he'll have an opportunity in the next hour."

BIRHANO and several *zebanias* came running after. They were voluble; the Danakil would shoot the master in the back; the savage would lead the way into an ambush; he would see to it that the master became lost in the thorn-bush. In each of the dire prophecies the master's

life was forfeit, the only disagreement was about the details of method. And Martindale came then to realize in what extreme terror the Danakil race was held. He paused at the edge of camp long enough to order the protesters back.

"If he attempts to bolt with the big rifle," he stated, "I'll drop him easy enough with this." And he patted the stock of his light but hard-hitting Springfield. But for another three hundred yards vociferous protests reached his ears.

The Danakil had carried himself throughout the tirade with an air of becoming dignity, much after the manner of a large and powerful dog surrounded by yapping spaniels. "With a little training," thought Martindale, "this man would make the best gunbearer in the whole North of Africa—I'd gamble anything on it!"

NOW, Martindale had not expected to see lion on that short hunt. It was almost sundown, and he did not intend to go far. Lions are extremely rare upon the Ethiopian highlands, and the idea of running into one had not entered his head when he removed the powder from the two cartridges in the big rifle. In fact, he went out simply to test and observe the Danakil. Many lions have been killed with the Springfield alone. But such a light gun without a heavier to back it up is decidedly not the thing to use against the great carnivora. Martindale had been charged twice by lions, and those two deadly and unbelievably swift rushes had given him great respect for his leonine majesty. He was a strong believer in the virtue of a second gun of large caliber to be held in reserve by a gunbearer of proved stanchness. But as things of that sort generally do, this lion-encounter happened with all the unexpectedness of a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. It came just as the sun met the horizon, and when the two men were not more than a half-mile from camp.

They were following a game trail with fairly open thorn-bush alongside, when a deep, rumbling growl issued from a heavy clump of low brush not more than a hundred yards ahead. Martindale stopped. The Danakil muttered something fiercely in his own tongue. And then deliberately, with stately tread, a big lioness walked out into the open and stood glaring at them. Martindale cursed himself under his breath for removing the cordite from the cartridges in the big gun. Why hadn't he taken a chance on the Danakil like a man? Why had he

allowed the panicky native reports of Danakil treachery to influence his judgment? Subconsciously he estimated that the lioness could cover the intervening distance, if she decided to charge, in seven seconds.

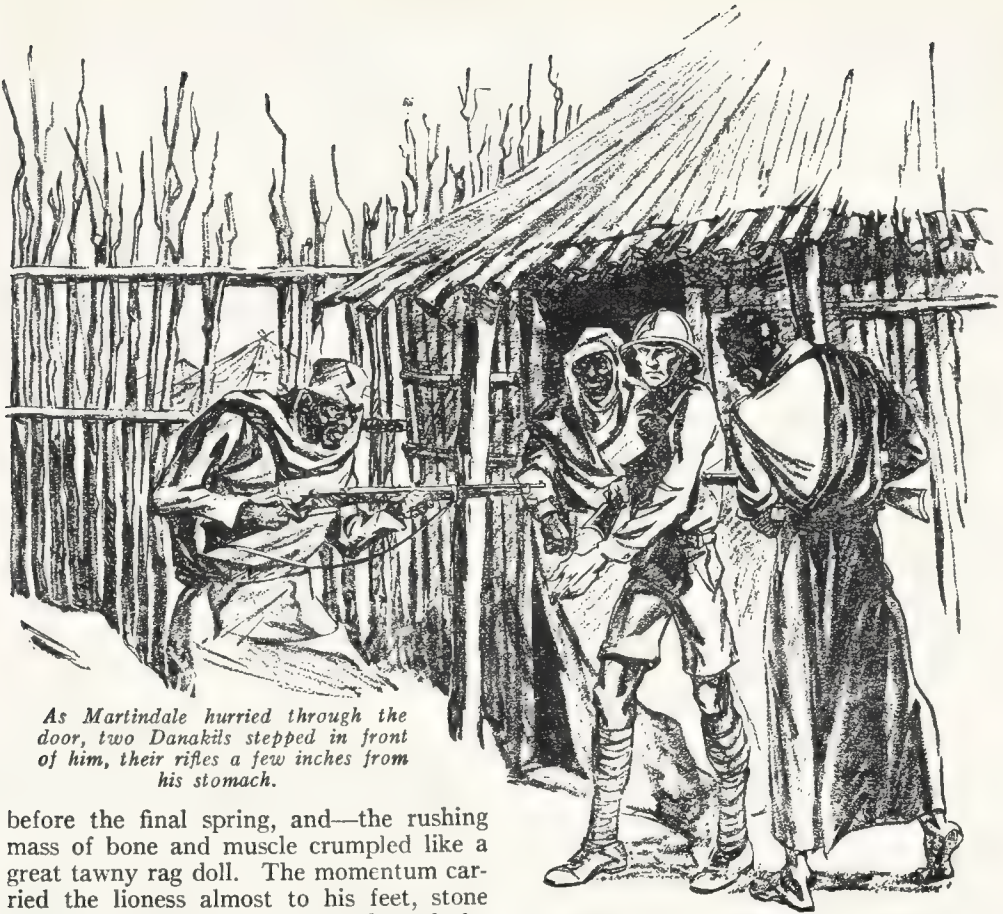
"With luck, three shots," he muttered.

Could she be stopped with three quick shots from the .30-caliber? Not unless they were placed absolutely right. In such hasty shooting that would be difficult, perhaps impossible. But she might turn and bolt. He waited, the light gun to his shoulder.

But the sun was just disappearing. The hunting time of the great carnivora was at hand. In the morning, Martindale knew, after a night of foray and a full meal, the lioness would have been an entirely different creature. Then there would have been no menace of an unprovoked charge. Now, however, with the shadows deepening and darkness just over the horizon approaching on winged feet, the big cat was a hundred per cent predatory. The long tail lashed, right, left—right, left. The legs crouched a trifle, allowing the body to sink several inches. The wide, tawny head with its round, glaring eyes, was lowered upon powerful, extended neck. The tail rose higher in its right-and-left lashing—and Martindale knew he was up against it. It would be better to get in one shot before the inevitable rush. He pulled the fine front sight to the center of that massive chest—he dared not risk a head shot in the failing light—and pressed the trigger.

AT the shot the lioness threw her tail straight in the air, rigid as the short tails of warthogs when alarmed, and came tearing, rushing like lightning, straight for the two men. A deep grunt issued from the cavernous mouth in ground-shaking volume. It was a rumbling sound that almost lifted the hair on a man's head, surprising in its capacity to inspire terror.

Martindale was dimly conscious of the Danakil beside him, crouching motionless, a crooning sound, fierce, savage, issuing from his tight lips. But Martindale was too busy to be more than barely conscious that the man was still beside him. The second shot had no more apparent effect than the first. There was not the slightest check to that valiant rush, and the lioness was now almost within springing distance. Martindale's mental processes telegraphed to his nerves that nothing but a head shot would now stop her in time. He raised the front sight a trifle. The explosion came a split second



As Martindale hurried through the door, two Danakils stepped in front of him, their rifles a few inches from his stomach.

before the final spring, and—the rushing mass of bone and muscle crumpled like a great tawny rag doll. The momentum carried the lioness almost to his feet, stone dead! The bullet had smashed through the frontal bone and emptied the brain-pan.

MARTINDALE wiped the sweat from his forehead with khaki shirt-sleeve. His heart was thumping his ribs like a trip-hammer. He felt peculiarly exhausted—as if climbing a high mountain at a terrific pace. The savage Danakil looked curiously into his face, peering from the side with a glance of veneration that verged upon worship. The man had not moved during that nerve-shattering charge. And Martindale knew that his judgment had been vindicated. A savage of such stanchness could not descend to treachery.

On his return to camp he threw out the two "dud" shells from the rifle; next time the Danakil served as gunbearer he should carry the rifle properly loaded. . . . Birhano, however, used to an occasional minor carelessness on the part of his master, picked up the discarded shells and placed them with the others.

And that night, while the full moon rode through the unclouded sky and the hyena chorus boomed from the bush its deep ac-

companiment to the chanting of his men, Martindale decided that his opportunity had arrived. It was time to enter the Danakil country. . . .

In the morning he held another long but rather sketchy conversation with the savage. Birhano's Arabic was none too good, but they established a few facts. The young Danakil was called "The Leopard" by his people. His father was a mullah, or high priest, corresponding to an *aboona* among Abyssinians, for the Danakils are Mohammedans. The Leopard's father, they gathered, had great influence with the sheik Ibn Ali, who, it appeared, was supreme among the desert tribesmen. The Danakils waged constant guerrilla warfare against the Isa Somali as well as the Abyssinians. Most important of all, the young man seemed to be sure he could secure immunity to Martindale and one other, but he could not answer for the rest of the caravan if the white man should take them along.

Martindale made his plans at once. He would need three pack-mules to carry tent, bed, food, cooking utensils—and ammunition. The rest he would send to Addis

Ababa in charge of his head-man with a letter to the principal Indian trader at the capital, instructing him to pay off the men and store the specimens. One man to help with the mules and do the cooking would be taken with Martindale and the Leopard—if one of the caravan would volunteer. If not, he would go with the Danakil alone. Martindale lined up the men and explained his intentions. Instant silence fell upon the assemblage, and they regarded him as he finished speaking with that impersonal, detached air of mournful curiosity that carried the inference: "What strange creature is this which was living a moment ago but has now departed this life!" Martindale realized with a queer, surprised feeling that he was already looked upon as dead.

For a half-hour Birhano did everything in his power to persuade his master that the expedition was sheer suicide. And he positively refused to have anything to do with it. If his Gaytah persisted in this mad enterprise, he would have to go alone. The youthful interpreter was sure that not one of the Abyssinians would be foolhardy enough to thrust his head into what he scornfully termed the Danakil trap. But Martindale was firm.

"All right, Birhano. I'll go with the Leopard. You men are to pack up and start at once for Addis. But first you can help pack my necessary baggage."

BIRHANO, with tears in his eyes, begged his master to reconsider. He pointed out the impossibility of Martindale's even conversing with the Danakil. A hundred misunderstandings would arise, he said, and he drew a gruesome picture of Danakil torture, treachery and bloodthirstiness. But Martindale silenced him and went on calmly packing.

When the white man had seen the last of the three mules loaded and turned to say good-by to the caravan men, however, Birhano came out in his true colors.

"If Gaytah will not change his mind—if he goes—then me, Birhano, will go too. But"—and his face held the most woe-begone expression Martindale had ever seen upon a human being—"it is surelee to be the las' time we are ever see thi-is country again. We are never come back."

Martindale appreciated the tremendous moral courage this decision demanded from the Abyssinian. The lad had imbibed terror of the Danakils with his mother's milk; a first-hand example of Danakil ferocity

had been thrust before him upon arrival at the village the morning after the raid; in his eyes all Danakils were devils, and to trust himself to one of those wild tribesmen—to enter their country with only one white man—was a thing he had never for a moment considered as a possibility.

"It is good, Birhano," his master said quietly. "I shall not forget."

And thereupon, after the departure of the main caravan for Addis Ababa, Martindale, Birhano and the Danakil savage, leading three pack-mules loaded with the barest necessities, dropped over the edge of the great escarpment and set out across the broad desert toward the rising sun.

Martindale was now fully convinced that their guide meditated no treachery and the big double-barreled express rifle was loaded with perfectly good cartridges. The white man knew well enough that if treachery was to come, both he and Birhano were dead men anyway.

MARTINDALE was prepared to find, on closer acquaintance, that the Danakil tribe was not as dangerously ferocious as set forth in common Abyssinian report. It had been his experience in other parts of the world that men were very much alike, whether savages, barbarians or civilized. There would be bloodthirsty members of the Danakil tribe, young bucks, most likely. There would also be a peaceful stock-raising element that desired nothing but to be let alone. This section, he anticipated, would be the bulk of the tribe.

On the whole, he expected to meet a nomad people closely resembling, in temperament, the old-time Cheyenne Indians of the American plains. The chiefs would be proud, haughty, independent. And Martindale knew that upon the impression he created with the chiefs depended the safety of himself and the faithful Birhano. The wilder element, the young men, would be the dangerous group. But from what he had heard of Danakil customs, he was confident that the big chiefs would dominate and wild youth would be under control. It was a ticklish job, this expedition, any way you looked at it, but the possibility of discovering a large animal entirely new to science he considered alone well worth the risk.

Martindale had little of that martyr spirit that has actuated a small but heroic group to sacrifice their lives for the advancement of science. He honored the memory of such devoted stoics, but he was well aware that

he was not made of such godly timber. Although willing to take more than ordinary risks in the interests of his chosen profession, he had no desire to add his name to that sainted company whose bleaching bones mark the milestones of progress. To become a martyr to any cause demands a peculiar type of mind which excludes many of the human qualities that Martindale possessed. He considered his chances of survival as somewhat better than even.

TOWARD noon they arrived at a small cluster of grass huts near a waterhole. There were not more than eight or ten men in the community, so there was nothing to fear here. The Danakil guide went forward and stood in conversation with the head-man, and when Martindale and Birhano approached they were received in dignified but cool silence. The other Danakils, Martindale noticed, did not interrupt when the Leopard was speaking, but they showed no sign of inferiority. Among Abyssinians, the grown son of a high priest, as the guide had claimed to be, would have been received by such poor villagers with much bowing and lifting of his hand to their foreheads. Either the Danakils were a more independent people, or the Leopard was not quite the power he had made himself out to be.

The tribesmen eyed the two with the most evident suspicion; and Birhano, whose knowledge of the Arabic they spoke was all too meager, whispered to his master: "I do not know, Gaytah, but I think they are trying to make up the mind w'en they shall kill us. We can fight thi-is band and kill them first, I think. It would be verree fine job if we begin now to shoot, I think."

"Nothing like that, Birhano," his master replied. "They're only asking why we're here. They won't cause trouble. Don't get the wind up. But I think you'd better stick close to me while we're here. They might run a spear through you if we separate, for they distrust you Abyssinians more than they do whites—and probably not without reason," he added to himself.

The Leopard motioned Martindale to enter a *tukul* out of the blazing sun. Birhano followed close at his heels. The interior was in comparative darkness after the glare of the bright sand without, and two women, clad in greasy skins that began at the waist and ended at the knees, were peremptorily ordered out by one of the natives. He prodded the elder gently but firmly with

the butt of his spear. Women are easily procurable in raids upon neighboring tribes, and their value is accordingly small. Among the Danakils, as in most savage tribes, women do the camp work, carrying water in heavy earthen jars, herding the goats and camels, cooking, and building the inevitable thorn *zarebas* around the encampments.

On the whole, the reception in this first small community was what Martindale had expected. The Danakils seemed to be willing he should pass into the country of their powerful chiefs, there to be dealt with as those feudal barons saw fit. Martindale knew that his safety would depend not so much upon the temper of these small nomadic bands as upon the decision of those who ruled the clans in the interior. He was not particularly apprehensive, for it had been his experience that a white man of judgment, unafraid and with a keen understanding of the savage mind, could, nine times out of ten, find a way to get along peacefully, even among hostiles.

A few days later, in a flat sandy hollow surrounded by rocky hills, Martindale came upon the greatest surprise of his life.

IT was late afternoon, and camp had been pitched near a desert well, a hole some five feet in diameter and twenty feet deep, dug in the dry course of an old stream-bed by wandering Danakils. A limited amount of brackish water collected at the bottom. It was the usual type of desert well found in this dry country. And when Martindale let himself down the rough sides to retrieve the goatskin container that had come loose from the end of the pack-rope they used for such purposes, he did so more from a boyish spirit of playfulness than from any desire to investigate the rocky formation. He had no more than a rudimentary knowledge of minerals, but even his unpracticed eye was caught by a small shining bit of rock lodged in the loose gravel of the sidewall.

He fastened the rope to the skin water-bailer and pried the stone from its lodgment. Another and slightly smaller stone of the same clear crystal-like appearance winked at him from its snug bed between two large rounded pieces of gravel. He pried loose a small handful, six or eight, of the little crystals within ten minutes, and then ascended to the surface. Birhano promptly began drawing water and pouring it in the sun-baked earthen troughs on top. The mules drank slowly and thankfully, and the Leopard carried a gourd of water to the

tent and filled the canvas wash-basin. Martindale entered his tent, let down the door-flap and examined the stones.

They were either rock-crystal or diamond—he was sure of that. The front sight of his rifle, hard and sharp, left no scratch upon the gleaming surface of the largest. But then, he thought, that really meant nothing, for even rock-crystal may be harder than tool-steel. Then Martindale remembered his carborundum whetstone and, taking it from the rawhide case of skinning-knives, sat on the tent floor-cloth crosslegged, like a shoemaker, and did his best to scratch the clear crystal with the carborundum. He could not detect the faintest mark! He stopped, laid the stones down and sat without moving.

He tried to remember what he had heard of the properties of diamond. It was the hardest substance in the world, he knew that. And, if his memory was to be trusted, carborundum was second, or third at least, in the scale of hardness. Glass, too, he knew was extremely hard. He rummaged in the kit bag and brought forth a small medicine bottle. A slight uneven projection on one of the transparent stones bit into and traced a distinct line across the convex surface. But still he was not sure. Martindale had seen many strange sights in his life; many startling surprises had been thrust upon him in his wanderings over the face of the earth; and he was too cautious to allow these stones to arouse wild and premature enthusiasm. He wrapped them in an old hunting-shirt, torn by thorns and faded by the relentless sun. Then he took up his rifle and set out for a walk over the sand. He ordered Birhano to prepare supper and made signs for the Leopard to remain in camp. There was nothing to hunt in that flat plain of sand. He merely felt that he must walk off some of his agitation.

A quarter of a mile from camp he sat down upon a rock. The sun was setting and the desert lay in a silent hush of expectancy, the world seemed motionless, waiting on tiptoe for the coming of darkness.

"If those innocently winking little stones are diamonds," he thought, "that small handful is worth almost a fortune. But they themselves would not be the most valuable thing about the discovery; it would mean that I have blundered upon a new diamond-field from which, in the years to come, perhaps thousands of other stones will be taken."

Gazing over that desolate plain, Martin-

dale could see, in imagination, giant mines in operation; crowds of native employes delving in mammoth open workings like those at Kimberly on the Orange River in south Africa.

THEN he thought of the complications sure to arise: France owned a strip of Somali coast on the Red Sea a few hundred miles to the eastward. Italy sat across the northern border in her colony, Erytrea, and watched with covetous eyes affairs in Abyssinia. Great Britain with her Sudan, Kenya and Somaliland was in a powerful position on two sides. What an inflammable situation! A diplomatic struggle for possession was sure to be staged, possibly a European war. Old treaties would be dug up. Precedents would be invoked, and early explorations cited. Mussolini would thunder. The Quai d'Orsay would bustle. Downing Street would hold a series of secret conferences. The British foreign secretary would, perhaps, point to the late operations of the Mad Mullah in Somaliland and issue a white book on the immediate necessity for dispatching troops to the Abyssinian border to prevent an imaginary recurrence of that fanatical outbreak. Ras Tessayah, bewildered, would do his best to play one European nation against another, hoping thus to save his country—and Martindale knew what little chance he would have. Yes, things would hum when the news got out.

Martindale returned in the darkness, guided by the light of Birhano's fire, entered his tent, let down the flap, and unwrapped the stones. They glowed in the dark like the eyes of predatory animals: It was internal light, light of their own—and then Martindale knew.

This was a matter for the greatest secrecy. Neither Birhano nor the Leopard would know what a diamond was if it should be explained to them, but they must not be given an inkling that anything unusual had been found. The discovery of a new diamond field, especially in this region, was a matter of too grave international import. Martindale was a little staggered at the possibilities for trouble that went with it. He lay awake that night until the dim fingers of dawn reached over the eastern horizon, but was unable to decide upon the best mode of procedure.

He was too much the scientist to put away all thoughts of the new and strange animal he had come to find. He would con-



Martindale watched without change of countenance while warriors seized the tent, cut the tie-ropes, and spread it out.

tinue with his original plans, but after that—should he return to Addis, inform Ras Tessayah of his discovery, and propose that a great international syndicate be formed to exploit the field? But Ras Tessayah, although nominally ruler of Danakil land as of Abyssinia, was really unable to control the Danakil tribe. The Sheik Ibn Ali, on the other hand, according to the young Danakil, did control the tribe. And he might be only too eager to ally himself with either of the three European countries owning colonies on his borders and they, in turn, without doubt, would be happy to oblige him with financial and military aid in establishing a small, independent "sheikdom" under their control—when they knew that in his deserts lay a diamond field. But Ras Tessayah could refuse foreigners permission to develop it. And he probably would. The more Martindale thought of it, the more he anticipated trouble.

MARTINDALE did no further exploring in the vicinity. Above all, he must not arouse in his two men a gleam of curiosity;

a thoughtless word dropped casually later by either, if they suspected, might rouse the sleeping dogs of war. He marked the well carefully upon his map and computed its location as accurately as he could by dead reckoning, using the mileages of each day's march from his field notes. Wells were not plentiful in this sandy desert and he knew he would have little trouble finding the place again.

He gave the order to pack up after breakfast and the small outfit, three men and three pack-mules, pushed on as usual. The diamonds had been wrapped carefully in the faded shirt and lay at the bottom of a box with skinning-tools, an extra pair of shoes and other clothing. Martindale walked in the lead, his mind busy with his problem.

Each roving band of Danakils they met behaved in much the manner of the men at that first encampment; listening gravely, coldly, and sometimes with a distinct air of hostility, to the explanations of the Leopard. But always that forceful and proud young savage carried his point and not a hand was raised against them. Martindale well knew

from the attitude of those nomads that had he been traveling in the opposite direction—out of the country—it would have been a different story: It was one thing to permit two strangers to make their way toward the *boma* of the Sheik Ibn Ali, but quite another to stand idly by and watch two enemies, a Feringi and a hated Abyssinian, peacefully depart for the safety of the border. Martindale was a keen judge of natives and he made a mental note that when the time arrived to leave Danakiland, he would demand from the sheik a bodyguard strong enough to impress any wandering bands they might encounter; for by that time he confidently expected that Ibn Ali would be his friend.

CHAPTER V

ON the afternoon of the third day after finding the diamonds they saw in the distance a solitary conical hill set in the midst of the sandy waste like a lighthouse upon a submerged rock at sea. The Leopard pointed with brown, naked arm; and Birhano, who still refused to have confidence in the young savage, translated:

"He say, it is the *boma* of Ibn Ali. There, w'ere the hill come up from the groun'. Thi-is hill, he say, is the for-rt, the stronghold of the Danakil chief. Thi-is Nebur"—Leopard—"say his father is live there too with the Sheik. Oh, Gaytah, it is verree far back to my cuntry. I do not think we are see it any more, I do not think so, Gaytah."

"Cheer up, Birhano. The Leopard is a way-up good lad. He's handled this thing perfectly so far. His heart is right. He'll do what he promised. Ibn Ali may be a tough old egg, but we'll find a way to make it worth his while to treat us right. We'll come out."

Martindale had a sympathetic understanding of Birhano's horror of the Danakils, for he knew that a lifelong prejudice cannot be wiped out in a day, no matter how one of the objects of suspicion may conduct himself.

Birhano observed thoughtfully:

"If they are kill us, then w'en we are dead we will not know anything; we will not know we are dead, then." This departure into the realm of metaphysics was a triumph of deep reasoning for the Abyssinian, and evidently the thought was new and vastly comforting to him. He plodded

along in silence for a time and then asked doubtfully:

"Gaytah has maybe the charm, the magic, w'ich will protect the ghost from the *aboonas* if they are kill us with the spear? *Aboonas* sometime' can follow the ghost w'en it make' the safari, they say."

"Sure," said Martindale, amused but ready to lend the faithful youth all the encouragement he could. "I have many charms, magic words that I can use to cover our ghostly tracks if they kill us. No *aboona* would dare to follow us on the Great Trek to Ghostland. If they did, they'd fall over the first cliff they came to and break their fool necks. Cheer up, Birhano. They wont butcher us like wart-hogs. We'll get on with them."

"But if they do," insisted the lad, "it is good thing to know that Gaytah can protect the ghost. Will Gaytah please now to make the magic—so if they are kill us quicklee w'en we come it will be said already?"

This was a natural request from Birhano's superstitious point of view, and Martindale, ready to oblige, recited with elaborate seriousness:

"'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
To talk of many things,
Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax
And cabbages and kings.'"

The verse had a smooth-running alliterative quality, musical and mysterious to Birhano's uncomprehending ears, and the boy was visibly cheered and braced. He marched beside the mules, repeating what he could remember, until the Leopard halted and pointed silently to a lone horseman approaching across the plain.

Martindale stopped his small company, and examined the horseman through the binoculars. He rode leisurely, at a careless prancing trot, and the glass showed a rifle across his back hanging by a slingstrap; his horse stepped daintily with arching neck and nervous bowing head. The animal appeared to be almost pure Arab in its action, restless, eager, and the picture of wiry grace; it was an entirely different breed from those Martindale had seen in Abyssinia. The rider guided his mount directly toward them, reined up a short way off, and the Leopard went forward to parley.

The Leopard turned, and motioned for Martindale and Birhano to come forward, using the common Danakil sign, arm outstretched toward them, hand open and palm

down and then closing the fingers without moving the arm. The horseman was the same light chocolate brown as the Leopard. His features held no trace of the negroid, and the nose was thin and arching. A typical Arab beard, slightly curly, veiled the lower part of the face, and the eyes were dark and piercing. He inclined his head just a trifle and muttered, as Martindale approached:

"*Salaam aleikum.*" (Peace be to you.)

"*Salaam aleikum,*" the white man returned with equal haughtiness.

The Leopard spoke, and Birhano explained:

"He say thi-is one is from Sheik Ibn Ali,"—when the Abyssinian pronounced the name both the Leopard and the newcomer inclined their heads—"to bring us to the *boma*, the stronghold of the Sheik." And Birhano rushed on in a voluble flow of words, his own belief: "Oh, Gaytah, it is *kufanoo* that the Sheik do not send more men to meet us. It is not a good sign, I think, w'en he send onlee one man. Maybe he will not believe thi-is Nebur w'en he say we 'ave save his life. I think we are soon to be dead, Gaytah." And the lad mumbled under his breath:

"The-time-is-come-the-Wullus-say-to-tuck-of-manee-t'ing."

Martindale also was surprised that they were not received by a large band of warriors. An Abyssinian chief would certainly have turned out his entire fighting force and swooped down upon them with a great show, a warlike panoply, to impress the white man with his power. For of course the Sheik Ibn Ali knew all about them by this time. It would have been impossible to approach his *boma* without word being taken ahead by runners from the various small encampments they had passed. This cool sending of but one man was, in a savage community, nothing but a direct insult.

"Tell him," instructed Martindale in dignified tones, "that his master perhaps does not know what is due to one who is a great chief in the country of the Feringies. But it makes no difference. Let it pass."

THEY followed the guide, trudging wearily through the sand, the sinking sun throwing their shadows far ahead. A great crowd of curious villagers stood about upon the hilltop, peering in their direction in silent curiosity. The hill was high and rocky, and the tired pack-mules found the grade almost too steep for them. It was

crowned by a palisade twenty feet high built of timbers with sharpened ends thrust toward the sky, and Martindale saw that inside the *boma* were many large grass-roofed huts built in the Abyssinian round style.

But what struck him most forcibly was the undisguised hostility of the inhabitants. He thought that never, in any part of the world, had he sensed such general hatred and distrust in a crowd. There was no pretense at veiling it. It stood out as clearly upon those dark faces as if written there in plain English words. But the surprising thing was the fact that, while they held such enmity, not one of them—not even a woman or a child—made a move to give play to his feelings; not a stone was thrown, not a taunt was hurled, not a word spoken. The Sheik Ibn Ali had his people well in hand.

But when Martindale entered the wide gate, he was again surprised at the numbers of modern rifles in evidence. *Zebanias*—warriors—stalked about the inclosure armed not with spears and rhino-hide shields or ancient smooth-bore muskets, but carrying, slung over bare backs, thoroughly up-to-date rifles; and cartridge-belts filled with gleaming new shells encircled brown waists.

"Why," he thought, "this Sheik's a man of parts! His organization makes Ras Tessayah's look like a medieval toy-shop. Trajanian was right: the Danakils are smuggling guns by wholesale. Trouble lies ahead—plenty of it—for Ras Tessayah."

They were led to a small hut, and Birhano was told that this would be their lodging. An interview with Ibn Ali was not mentioned, and Martindale decided not to bring up the subject as yet but to make himself at home and wait. Birhano looked about the dingy interior with an air of dark distrust.

"It is not good, Gaytah," he said lugubriously, "to be met by onlee one. It is verree *kufanoo* the way thees people are jus' stand still w'en we go by. It is not good for the Sheik to be nowhere aroun' w'en we are come in. Thi-is Nebur, I think, is now go to his father, and they are make the plan in w'at way they are kill us, I think." And the distraught lad, mumbling an unintelligible line about "The-time-is-come-the-Wullus-say—" stepped outside to see to the unpacking. In a moment he was back, his eyes large with fear:

"O Gaytah, they are take the *buckalows*

away! They are not 'ere. The cartridge—the tent, the bed, the food—it is all gone away."

Martindale looked out the low doorway. The three pack-mules were being led off by Danakil *zebanias*, and the Leopard walked beside them in hotly argumentative conversation, evidently protesting. As Martindale watched, the Leopard turned back alone. He arrived and spoke slowly.

"He say," translated Birhano in despair, "it is the order of the Sheik Ibn Ali. That is all he will say. I ask him why. He onlee say it is the order of the Sheik."

MARTINDALE thought of the diamonds wrapped in the faded shirt in a box on one of those mules. He hurried through the door, his rifle across his arm. Two Danakils stepped in front of him. The muzzles of their modern guns were instantly presented some two inches from the pit of his stomach. Martindale stopped and gently pushed aside the two gun-barrels. The Leopard, uttering swift words of caution, seized Birhano from behind as that unreasoning youth made a leap for the nearest of the two threatening his master. And Birhano blurted vociferously:

"He say we mus' not fight, Gaytah. He say to be quiet. I will not be quiet—" And the Abyssinian struggled desperately. "They will kill us; we mus' fight now!"

"Stop it!" Martindale ordered with sharp decision. "Stop it, I say!" Birhano quieted down, and Martindale went on:

"Take it easy, Birhano. This sort of thing is to be expected. You must keep cool—or I'll be compelled to tie you up. Everything depends on the Sheik. You simply must not precipitate things by hasty action."

The Leopard spoke again and Birhano translated:

"He say now it is best if we are send the *tabanjahs* to Ibn Ali. He say he will take the guns, please, to the Sheik." And Birhano found this suggestion too much for his self-control. He broke out in a torrent: "But we mus' not do that, Gaytah! W'en we have no guns, they are surelee kill us verree quicklee. O, we mus' not do that!"

Martindale calmly turned the thing over in his mind. The rifles would do them no good whatever in this stronghold bristling with modern arms. He had the usual man of action's aversion to parting with his weapons, but as he considered the proposal, he decided the Leopard had his reasons.

"He is probably right," he answered. "We can never fight our way out if the Sheik makes up his mind to hold us. It would be far better, as a guarantee of good intentions and a bluff at friendship, to send them voluntarily to Ibn Ali to keep for us while we remain here. He can seize them any time. They are his already if he wants them. It is better to give them up cheerfully as if we had every confidence in him than to have them taken by force."

Birhano protested violently. He was desperate, and his words and horrified looks showed a new apprehension; was his master approaching the abyss of insanity? But Martindale, having made his decision, gave his orders in a calm voice.

"Tell the Leopard," he said, "to present the guns to Ibn Ali with my compliments. He should add, as he gives them to the Sheik, that I desire him to keep them while I remain here as his guest—I shall have no need of them while under the protection of so powerful a chief. Have him make that point clear: 'I shall have no need of them while I remain under the *protection* of so powerful a chief.'"

FOOD was brought that night by Somali slaves, and Birhano snorted contemptuously at the quality and amount. These confirmed his fears; it was obvious they were to be butchered. No sahib would ever receive such treatment, he said, held prisoner, guarded by stalwart savages who stood impersonally at their posts and refused to answer simple questions, unless destined for slaughter. It was all too plain. And again Birhano repeated what he could remember of the magic words.

Early in the morning the Leopard came to the hut, and behind him trailed a heavily armed force. Birhano listened to a few words in Arabic.

"Now we are go to see the Sheik Ibn Ali." His air was one of suppressed excitement. He knew as well as his master that their lives perhaps hung upon this interview. "He say we mus' be verree careful. He say Ibn Ali is mos' dangerous man. If he like us—we are safe. But we mus' say no thing w'at might make him mad. The Sheik is verree easy to get mad, he say."

Surrounded by the armed guard, they approached a large mud and wattle-built *tukul* with the usual grass roof, but at least twice the size of any other within that high *boma* of sharpened stakes. The escort halted at the entrance, and the Leopard, followed by

Four stakes were driven into the ground and Martindale was spread-eagled between them. "Now," he thought, "they will bring whips and cut my back to ribbons!"



Martindale and Birhano, entered. At the far end of the crude one-room council-house a group of turbaned men stood upon the right hand of a heavy-set, bearded individual reclining upon a couch covered with rugs and skins. Upon the left another group was ranged in double line. But these wore no turbans, and their hair stood out in the usual Danakil style.

Those, thought Martindale, are the war-chiefs, while the turbaned ones are the mullahs, the priests. And now he noticed among the priests two or three wearing green turbans; these had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and were therefore "*hadjis*," full of grace, and privileged to sport the brighter turbans.

The Sheik Ibn Ali made no sign when Martindale advanced, and bowing, made the usual salutation:

"*Salaam aleikum.*"

Only one man in the group, one of the green-turbaned mullahs, returned the greeting.

"That will be the Leopard's father," Martindale thought.

Ibn Ali spoke rapidly to the Leopard, and while the young warrior repeated the words to Birhano, Martindale studied the Sheik.

THE face showed great strength of character. Here was no soft Oriental potentate satisfied to dream away the days upon luxurious couches, listening to the poems of Hafiz and mumbling over the Koran. Here was no voluptuary, satiated with sensual pleasures of mind and body. Martindale sized him up as primarily a man of action—a natural leader to whom sudden alarms, swift descents, bold forays, were as meat and drink. And beneath those black brows lurked a gleam that suggested a dynamic and violent spirit, perhaps a mind spurred and goaded by some consuming ambition. The predatory nose, thin and arching, and the small, cruel mouth hinted—no, promised—destruction to whoever should stand in the way of that fixed purpose.

"No wonder the Danakils have caused the Abyssinians so much trouble," thought Martindale. "With a chief like this to lead them, I should not be surprised to hear some day that Ras Tessayah has been overthrown and Ibn Ali has become ruler of Abyssinia."

Birhano translated the Sheik's words:

"He want to know w'at we are do in his country. He say he is surprise' we do not know that Danakils kill Feringies and Habish" (Abyssinians). "W'y do you come here, he say."

"Tell him," replied Martindale coolly, "that we have heard of a strange animal, unknown to the white man, that ranges through his country. Explain my business, collecting specimens, and say that we ask permission to hunt this animal. We have come with a small caravan and have sent our guns to him to prove that we are on a peaceful mission. Do not mention my saving the life of the Leopard. He has already heard that, and it is better for us to say nothing about it."

And while this speech was being translated, the white man saw, lying on the floor behind the Sheik, the packs of his three mules: the green tent, the camp bed, his small folding-chair, two canvas dunnage-bags and two or three small boxes. It was all there, roped, just as taken from the tired pack-animals. In one box with other clothing would be the torn and faded khaki shirt rolled and tied around the transparent stones that gleamed in the dark like the eyes of predatory animals—the trinkets that in spite of their worthlessness from a utility standpoint, could be transformed, by the magic of the white man's civilization, into thousands of bushels of wheat, herds of cattle, or league upon league of smiling meadowland.

IBN ALI received the reply in silence.

Martindale had expected him to doubt, possibly to laugh outright at the idea of a white man collecting the skins of animals as a business. And he was prepared to explain his statement. He was surprised at the Sheik's answer:

"He say," Birhano stated, "I do not let nothing the Feringies do surprise me. They are strange people. They are like the lit-tle children in some way', he say, but in other way they are fierce to fight. He will not be surprise', he say, if you tell him you come to chase the lit-tle bug w'at hop in the sand." Martindale smiled as he thought of a very learned and charming scientist at

home who specialized on fleas, a man whose tireless exertions had done much to build up the famous Rothschild collection. Birhano continued:

"He want to know w'at you have brought in the pack. He will look in the baggage from the mule!" Martindale watched without change of countenance while two warriors seized the green tent and dragged it before the Sheik. With deft strokes of curved knives they cut the tie-ropes and spread it out. Ibn Ali sat without moving. Would he unwrap the torn khaki shirt when he came to it? If he did—would he know the value and the import of that handful of precious stones?

MARTINDALE assumed a careless attitude, forced his eyes from the box and fell to considering the green-turbaned mullah, the Leopard's father. He was a venerable patriarch with features set in a benign expression. Martindale, studying him keenly, thought the fatherly expression of benignity too set, too much an official mask to be relied upon as an index of the real character beneath. The eyes were in too sharp contradiction to the tolerant features. They shifted constantly and seemed capable of scanning a wide arc without a turn of the head, and the white man felt sure that he detected a calculating and envious twist to the corners of the mouth as the mullah nodded at a sharp staccato observation of the Sheik's. Could this follower of the Prophet, who controlled the fanatical superstitions of the Danakils, himself have ambitions, jealousies gnawing at his narrow heart? Did he harbor the craving to be temporal as well as spiritual chief? "That would not be at all unusual in a high priest," Martindale thought.

One by one the articles were untied and closely inspected. When the box was brought forth and opened, Martindale, summoning all his self-control, affected a yawn and observed to Birhano:

"Ho, hum! I wish they'd get this over and let us know what to expect."

The fastenings of the box were pried loose. Out came the old shoes, some miscellaneous clothing, a few cartridges—Martindale could not keep his eyes off that box—and then the ragged shirt. Methodically the half-naked warrior unrolled the faded yellow garment. Ibn Ali, reclining on the couch languidly watched, his attitude one of careless indifference—almost exaggerated indifference, but Martindale knew,

as he glanced swiftly at those keen dark eyes, that Ibn Ali missed no detail.

The shirt was unrolled and the rough stones fell to the dirt floor. The warrior stooped to pick them up. Martindale's eyes were glued to Ibn Ali's features, and he thought he detected a slight start—so slight as to be all but imperceptible. The chief did not change position. Three short words he spoke while the man was in the act of retrieving the stones—words that evidently meant "Pick them up," for the stones were re-rolled in the shirt, and Martindale saw, with infinite relief, the shirt go back into the box and the next piece of baggage dragged forward.

"No," he thought, "Ibn Ali has no idea what they are! That slight start was imagination on my part. No man, with a realization of so great a treasure in his grasp, could affect such indifference. It is not in human nature." And the white man breathed deeply and his heart resumed its normal rate. Ibn Ali pointed to the other box. He seemed impatient to have the boring examination ended. And when the last article, the camp-chair, was placed before him, he waved it aside and spoke a few words, carelessly.

Birhano whispered:

"He say for thees men to go 'way. He say he will talk with us alone aw'ile."

Priests and warriors, the Leopard and his father, all filed slowly through the doorway. Martindale and Birhano were signed to remain standing where they were. The last of the bodyguard passed from the big room. The Sheik still reclined in the same attitude of indifference. But as the men disappeared, he suddenly stiffened, turned—and stared straight in Martindale's eyes, and in that penetrating, hostile gaze Martindale read, without a word being spoken, two things: the secret was out—the Sheik knew a diamond when he saw one; and he had made up his mind that these two, the white man and the Abyssinian, should never live to spread in the world the news of the discovery of a diamond-field in his domain!

In sharp, clicking sentences he spoke to Birhano. The boy recoiled, startled at the swift change in this dreaded hereditary enemy of his race.

"He say—Oh, Gaytah, something verree *kufanoo* has happen'! He say w'ere did you fin' those stone'? W'at stone' it is I do not know. Maybe w'at fell from the lit-tle shirt—I do not know. Oh, he is verree

mad; he is like the lion inside. He will kill us now, I think—"

But Martindale broke in impatiently. "Straighten up, Birhano! What does he say? Give me his exact words—as nearly as you can."

Ibn Ali's appearance and manner had changed in so marked a way that Martindale knew instantly that from now on it was not a question of securing a specimen of an unknown animal—but of preserving his own and Birhano's life.

"He say w'ere do you fin' those stone'?"

THE intuitive thought flashed across Martindale's mind: "No matter what his intentions are, he will not kill us until he knows. He will not put me to death until he has that information! Our only chance for life is to refuse and—later—compromise with him."

"Tell him," he instructed the shaken Birhano, "that the secret is mine. Make him understand that neither you nor the Leopard have any idea where I found the stones, that you did not even know I had any stones until you saw them drop from the old shirt. Say that you do not understand why he should want to know about stones anyway."

When Birhano had finished speaking, Ibn Ali leaned back on his couch and broke out in a dazzling smile, a wide but mirthless exposure of white and perfect teeth. The expression was evil to an amazing degree, and it settled into a frozen grin that Martindale, observing him closely, could see held a large element of anticipation. "He is thinking with great relish," Martindale surmised, "of some quaint and exotic form of torture."

The chief did not speak for a moment. Then, with the same fixed and mirthless smile disfiguring his features, he addressed Birhano.

"He say for me to tell you, Gaytah, that he mus' know of the place w'ere the stones come from. He know it is in his country. He cannot let you go, he say, until he know. W'ere is the place? I think if you are tell him w'at he want' to know, Gaytah, he will let us go."

But Martindale was positive he read in Ibn Ali's dark features the unshakable resolution never to allow the one man who knew the location of a diamond-field in his domain go back to the world and spread the news. In fact, he knew it would be the natural decision of almost any Oriental

chieftain—especially one of Ibn Ali's stripe. No, he must not divulge his information yet, no matter what promises should be held out. It was his sole trading-capital, and if worse came to worst, it must be held in reserve to barter for his life and the life of his faithful servant. How this could be brought about without relying solely on the Sheik's word Martindale could not imagine. But something might happen. And the white man saw, in that quick appraisal of the situation, the last hope of securing the strange unclassified animal disappear. If he could save his own and Birhano's life he would be extremely lucky.

"Tell him," Martindale replied, "that I will give the information he seeks only after he has escorted me—and you—safely to the border."

Ibn Ali did not relax that image-like smile. He made a long harangue and accompanied his words with expressive and suave gestures. The smile became more human, less fixed, the head bowed at times gracefully, and what might be called the "surface" appearance of the countenance was friendly and slightly puzzled, as if the man were seeking a way out that would please all concerned and harm no one; for the moment it might have been the face of a refined and well-educated person of tender sympathy attempting to solve a delicate problem in a way that would not offend the sensibilities of a friend. But Martindale, watching the veiled glitter in the eyes, was not deceived.

BIRHANO was greatly relieved at the change—and completely taken in. "The Sheik is say that he is the friend of Gaytah. He say Gaytah shall be his brother, and if Gaytah will live 'ere wi-ith the Danakils, he will make Gaytah a chief, give him much land, many camels, much sheeps—and all the women he want. But, he say, maybe Gaytah want to go back to his own country. If this is so, he promise he will let us go w'enever we are ready to go. Oh, Gaytah, he say we are free to go 'ome! He is a gr-reat sheik, is thi-is one, I think."

"Didn't he mention the stones?" asked Martindale—without enthusiasm.

Birhano thought a moment. "Oh, yes. He say thees things will be done—w'en you 'ave say w're is the place that you fin' the stone'."

"I thought so," Martindale caustically observed. "Now tell him that he shall never know where the stones came from

until he takes us across the border—as I said before."

The importance of the stones—the cause of all this fencing between the Sheik and Martindale—was a complete mystery to Birhano. A white person in his position would have asked questions. But the native mind is different; the common Abyssinian presumes great chiefs and sahibs to be gifted with mental powers passing the comprehension of ordinary persons—powers, if not actually occult, at least so far advanced as to be beyond his grasp. And so Birhano gave the mystery little thought, dismissing the subject as something beyond his ken.

THE Sheik received Martindale's second refusal in frigid silence. He turned the matter over in his mind, and the silence became oppressive. Birhano shifted his feet nervously. Martindale, with hands resting on hips, watched Ibn Ali's face closely, but in spite of his keen attempt to fathom the workings of the mind beneath, he managed to maintain an appearance of disarming carelessness. Thus the seconds dragged on, and Birhano became more uncomfortable as he realized that an insurmountable barrier of some kind was rising between his master and the man who held their lives in his hand. Unable longer to stand the strain, he whispered to Martindale:

"If we do not obey him, Gaytah, we are dead verree soon, I think."

"You do not understand," Martindale answered, shortly. "I have certain information he wants. He promises us freedom if I give it to him. He would not keep his promise—for a very good reason. He will not put us to death until he secures that information. I must keep it until he escorts us across the border."

"Gaytah knows best," answered the Abyssinian with an inclination of the head.

Ibn Ali directed his gaze to Martindale's features, and the white man felt the steady appraisal analyzing him point by point. That grim, mirthless smile became more pronounced, and at length he spoke:

"If the Feringie chooses this way," Birhano translated, in low, carefully chosen words, "then, he say, there is onlee one thing for him to do." The boy stopped and looked at the Sheik for further enlightenment.

Ibn Ali half rose from the couch, and his bare feet swung to the floor. His back

straightened. His mind was made up. He called out sharply, loudly, and a dozen warriors appeared in the doorway. He spoke three more words, and the retainers entered silently and ranged themselves behind Martindale and Birhano. In the same tense, half-rising position, the Sheik uttered several Arabic sentences and waited for them to be translated:

"He say," began Birhano with a terrified countenance, "that it is verree easy to fin' the way to make Gaytah talk. He say this is one of the mos' easy things w'at there is to do. I will do thi-is now, he say."

At another sharp word, the two were seized from behind. Birhano struggled uselessly, but Martindale submitted without resistance. They were thrown to the ground and held until rawhide ropes were brought and their arms tightly bound. Birhano was muttering over and over:

"The - time - is - come - the - Wullus - say-to-tuck-of-many-t'ing."

Martindale smiled grimly. The irony of the situation struck him forcibly. He wondered if indeed the time had not come to talk of one thing, at least. But he put the thought from him.

"No," he said to himself, "I *must* stand to my resolution. It is our only chance." And then he thought of the torture to come. Men had, he knew, withstood the most refined and ingenious tortures; heroes, martyrs, had died upon wheel or rack, broken, shattered, babbling, but refusing to the last to renounce their God. Ah, but there was the point! Such noble spirits had been sustained by a fanatical religious mania, some exalted principle that would be lacking in this affair. Could he withstand torture—and if so, would it not perhaps be better to court a quick and simple death by divulging his information?

THERE are some ancient platitudes that in spite of worn and threadbare use are none the less true. One of them is, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Martindale was sustained by the unreasonable hope that something to their advantage would happen. So strong was this feeling that he determined to dismiss from his mind every thought but the one resolution to keep his secret to the last. He no longer doubted that once Ibn Ali had the information he sought, the death of himself and

Birhano would be only a matter of minutes. He *must* remain silent in the face of anything and everything!

Martindale, unlike Birhano, still had full confidence in the Leopard. And he suspected that the Leopard's father, if opportunity should offer, could be relied upon as an ally against the Sheik. But he did not dare to hope that the astute mullah would risk much simply to pay off his son's debt to the white man. "No," he thought, "if the head priest does move to our defense, it will be for motives of his own—for his own advancement."

IBN ALI gave orders in quick, jerky sentences, and retainers and vassals ran from the hut to carry out those instructions. In the center of the village was a clear area of sun-baked ground worn smooth by the passing of countless bare feet. To this Martindale and Birhano were dragged. Four stout stakes were driven into the ground, and Martindale was stripped and securely bound, spread-eagled between them, face down upon the ground.

"Now," he thought, "they will bring rhino-hide whips and cut my back to ribbons." And he felt rise within him such hatred for Ibn Ali that it took his last reserve of self-control to refrain from making himself ridiculous by an outpouring of impotent threats and meaningless curses at the inhuman monster who would do this thing. He did, however, address Birhano in a voice that he managed, by the exercise of the utmost strength of will, to keep low and natural.

"Tell that beast," he said, "if he goes through with this—I shall find a way—somehow—to kill him!" And Martindale, in the surging heat of his great anger against this smiling barbarian, felt a depth of power in himself he had never suspected. He *could* keep silence and he *would*! Every fiber of his being was steelled to it.

The Sheik received the ultimatum without sign. He had, perhaps, heard many another helpless captive deliver a brave speech before his nerve had been shattered and his physical and mental stamina had been broken! He attached no importance to the words, and his eager, blazing eyes showed a kind of degenerate curiosity to know the hardihood that lay in the strange heart of a white man. He was impatient to begin.

The next installment of this stirring and authentic novel of savage Abyssinia will appear in our forthcoming May issue. Be sure to read it.

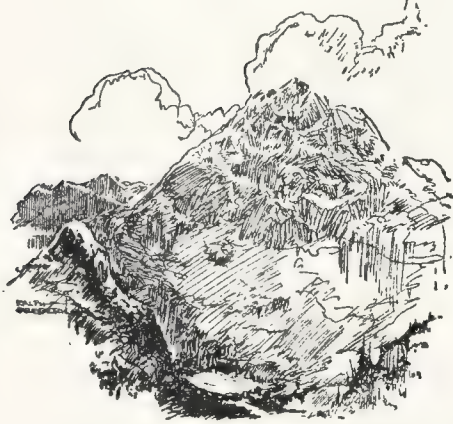
"No Flyer Is Ever Lost"

By ROBERT
WINCHESTER

Illustrated by Ralph Frederick



*A lively story of high flying
and plain loving by the gifted
author of "My Deputy."*



*They were over the highest peak of
the Wasatch when the connecting-
rod broke.*

TOMMY NEWEL was dancing with Betty Howard, who was chanting, as close to his right ear as she could, something that went like this: "Ol' Tommy Tucker Newel from Maine!" Betty was from Georgia and the way she said Maine sounded as if it were spelled "*May-un*." "Sing for your supper, Tommy," she continued; "sing for Betty!"

"You better stop that Tommy Tucker stuff," Tommy threatened, "or I'll call you Liz! Here I come all the way down to El Paso to see your pa and you begin that darn' Tommy Tucker stuff!"

Years before, Tommy's father had gone down to Georgia to build a couple of inter-urban railroads, and for seven or eight years the Newels had lived on the next plantation to the Howards. The Howard girls, having no brother of their own, had taken Tommy Newel as substitute. . . .

"Why, Thomas!" Betty said now, "I didn't know that you didn't like to be called Tommy Tucker! You know that you *are* Tommy Tucker, and you *did* sing for your supper—the book says so, and shows a picture of you and everything."

Just then the music stopped and being near one of the exits to the country-club veranda, Betty led the protesting Mr. Thomas T. Newel out to a secluded corner.

"Now, Thomas," she said, perching herself on the rail, "you can start and tell me all that has happened to you since you were sixteen and went away, and how long you're going to stay and all about it."

"Nothing happened to me. I went to school and when I got through I went into the flying-game; that's all. I flew that darn' crate I arrived in down here because your pa wrote my outfit that he was interested and wanted to talk to a flying-man about some planes for use in the oil-fields. I'm leaving for San Francisco in the morning early, and I'll be back next week."

Betty laughed. "Same ol' Tommy Tucker!" she teased. "Such a wonderful word-painter! Never did believe in wasting words, did you, Tommy? Sing for Betty!"

"All right," said Tommy, darkly, "I'm going to hunt up that bird you're engaged to and tell him your right name is Liz Ann; and what's more, I'll tell him all about the pretty little black-and-white kitty you insisted on picking up in the woods against the advice of your friends; and also—"

"Tommy, you wouldn't be so mean! Anyway, I reckon he wouldn't believe you.

Why, there's Sally Calvert! Tommy, you wait here for me. I'll be back in a minute."

"I will not. I'm going to hunt your man and—" Tommy saw that he was talking to Miss Howard's charming back, so he stopped, and gazed at Sally Calvert.

"My gosh!" he said right out loud—and decided then and there that he would wait and get a few details. He also promptly decided that Sally Calvert was the prettiest girl under all flags that fly.

Tommy waited for a time and was just on the point of going to find them, when John C. Howard came along. That settled it as far as Tommy was concerned; for the rest of the evening he talked airplane. He didn't have a chance to see Betty alone again, and he couldn't as much as catch a glimpse of Sally Calvert.

IT was a little after five o'clock the next morning and Tommy was just starting to climb in the airplane, with two mechanics ready to swing the prop' for him, when a big, powerful roadster came roaring across the field, to stop within a few feet of him.

Betty Howard got out, and after her Sally Calvert, who was carrying a little black traveling-bag.

"Oh, Tommy!" Betty gasped, one pretty hand to her heart. "I was so afraid you'd be gone! I—"

"I will be, in a minute," said Tommy sternly, feeling in his heart that he was due to do something that he shouldn't. "Go away from me, woman!" he ordered.

Betty Howard drew a long breath and her head went up and back. He knew, from the old days, what that meant. "Thomas Tucker Newel," she started, "you see Sally Calvert here? Well, you take her to San Francisco right away; you hear me?"

"Yassum," answered Tommy firmly. "I hears you, but I can't reach you-all. This is no bus for joy-riding. It's an old Army crate and—"

"I don't care what it is. Sally Calvert must be there by four this evenin'. You take her and—" Here Betty began to coax, trying hard to make the corners of her lovely mouth go down a little. "Please, Tommy, be a good boy and take her! You don't know what it means, and—"

"No; and I don't give a darn," said Tommy—but he knew that he was lost. "This bus is not in good shape! I flew it down here only because it is the type your—"

Betty came as close to him as she could get, lifting her pretty face to his. "Tommy! You love me, don't you, Tommy?"

"As a sister," answered the harassed Tommy, "I love you like the dickens—but not enough to—"

"Oh," said Sally Calvert, "I— Betty, he—he doesn't want to take me! What can I do? I can't go back now and—" She put the bag down and made a little despairing gesture which totally completed Thomas T. Newel's ruin. If it had been any other girl who had come calmly and coolly on the field and asked to be taken to San Francisco, Tommy would have just as calmly and coolly told her to go fly herself—or words to that effect. But Sally Calvert backed up and aided by Betty Howard was to Mr. Newel an entirely different problem.

"My great-great-grandpa was a Presbyterian elder," he said, sorrowfully. "But the two of you combined could have made the old boy lay his Bible down, I bet you! All right, I'll take her! I don't know what the heck she's got to get there for, and what's more I don't give a darn. All is—"

"That's a nice boy, Tommy dear; and now I love you." And Betty kissed him, much to the delight of the two deeply interested mechanics. "Didn't I tell you he would, Sally Calvert?" she chortled. "He'll do anything for me that—"

"Listen," said Tommy, sternly, "if this here Sally Calvert has got to be in San Francisco by four this afternoon, you can dispense with any further conversation! Get up here, Sally."

Tommy put her in the little seat behind him and hooked the safety-belt around her. Sally smiled, though it was a rather wan little smile. "I—I'm not afraid," she said, "but it's the first time I've ever been—"

"You're absolutely all right," Tommy said. "I've flown these things for years. You just sit tight and your old Uncle Thomas will do the rest. It's just as safe as an automobile, and a darn' sight safer than a boat." And he gave the signal to swing the prop'.

Betty waved her hand to them as the airplane went down the field and took off in the wind, spiraling up to get altitude.

Tommy straightened out due west. Whatever it was that had started Sally Calvert off for San Francisco was evidently forgotten at the moment. She sat straight in her seat, her eyes shining, her proud little head up. Tommy motioned

back toward a package of sandwiches and a big thermos bottle of coffee, and this time when she smiled back, the smile was a real one.

STEADILY they barged along at around a hundred and ten, the old bus doing its best, which was about all it could do.

About eleven o'clock Sally opened the package and ate some of the sandwiches and drank a little coffee. At one, they were over the highest peak of the Wasatch, when without any preliminary warning, the connecting-rod broke. Right there, Mr. Thomas T. Newel showed that he was a regular. He side-slipped, glided, side-slipped again, brought her up, a dead plane, to level and made a perfect three-point landing on what had looked, when he started down, to be about the size of a pocket-handkerchief between two of the mountains. It was a lava-bed, almost as smooth as a billiard table, a half a mile long and about as wide. A plane lands at about forty miles an hour and as he taxied along, one of the wheels ran into a crack and hung there and he cracked up—not as far as the fuselage went, but the right aileron and wing were washed out. When they came to a dead stop, Tommy turned and looked at Sally, a grin on his thin, tanned young face.

"What did you come down for, Tommy?" she asked.

"Well, I'll tell you in strict confidence. After the connecting-rod broke I didn't see any special reason for staying up there any longer at the moment."

Sally nodded gravely. "I see. You came down to fix it. Will it take long? The boat sails at six and I— How long will it take, Tommy? I love to fly."

Tommy looked at her suspiciously for a moment, then decided that she really didn't have the slightest idea of how near she had been to joining the angel chorus.

"Let's eat some of the sandwiches and drink some coffee," he said. "Then we can figure it out. Unbuckle your belt, Sally."

"But, Tommy, I don't reckon that we'll have much time, will we? How far are we from San Francisco?"

Tommy decided to be frank.

"Listen, Sally: something broke up there that I can't fix—and even if I could, the wing is out of commission. This bus has been a good old baby, but like they say down in your country, 'She's done flew her last time,' until she gets a lot of repairs.

Only way we can get to anywhere is to start and walk."

Sally had taken off the belt during his speech; and now at the finish she stood up, looked at the towering mountains, at the plane and at Tommy Newel—and her dark eyes widened. "Oh, my goodness gracious, Tommy! Do you mean we're *lost*?"

"Lost, your grandma!" said Tommy stoutly. "No flyer is ever lost! All we got to do is to walk up that mountain and—"

"What? Walk up that mountain! In *these*?" And Sally held up a slender little arched foot clad in a high-heeled pump. "I—I don't reckon I could, Tommy, in these shoes. Oh, now I'll miss them, and they'll sail without—I don't know—" Her eyes began to get misty and the corners of her mouth to droop.

"I'll do the knowing for this outfit," Tommy said hastily. "Let's go sit in the shade of the wing and eat. I'm as hungry as the dickens. There's nine hundred and eight ways of getting to San Francisco from here—so don't worry."

They went over and sat down, and after eating some more of the sandwiches and drinking some coffee, Sally's spirits rose.

"I reckon I feel better now, Tommy," she announced. "I'm away from there, anyway! And now tell me."

"Tell you what?"

"The nine hundred and eight ways of getting to San Francisco."

"All we have to do is to walk slowly up the mountain and down the mountain until we see a house or a town and then keep walking until we get to it."

Sally smiled. "I'm not afraid, Tommy; but what if we don't see any house or town?"

"Why then, we'll go over the mountain like old Mr. Bear for to see what we can see. Now, let's hold a council of war. First, here's you and here's me—and—"

"That's right, Tommy," interrupted Sally gravely. "Here's you and here's me—go on from there."

"Listen," said Tommy sternly. "I know grammar but I haven't time to use it. Don't interrupt again, please!"

"I wont, Tommy. Go on from 'here's you and here's me.'"

TOMMY stopped, undecided whether to give battle or ignore. Finally he decided to proceed. "You can wear my overalls over that dinky dress and my soft shirt under them to stop any scratch—"

"Why should I?" demanded Sally hotly. "What's the matter with this gown, Mr. Thomas Newel?"

"Not a darn' thing," Tommy answered promptly. "It's a perfectly good gown; only it's a little thin and there isn't much of it to go rambling around over strange mountains with, and—"

"Not enough of it? How much do you think there ought to be to a gown, anyway? This—"

"I wouldn't dare to guess," interrupted

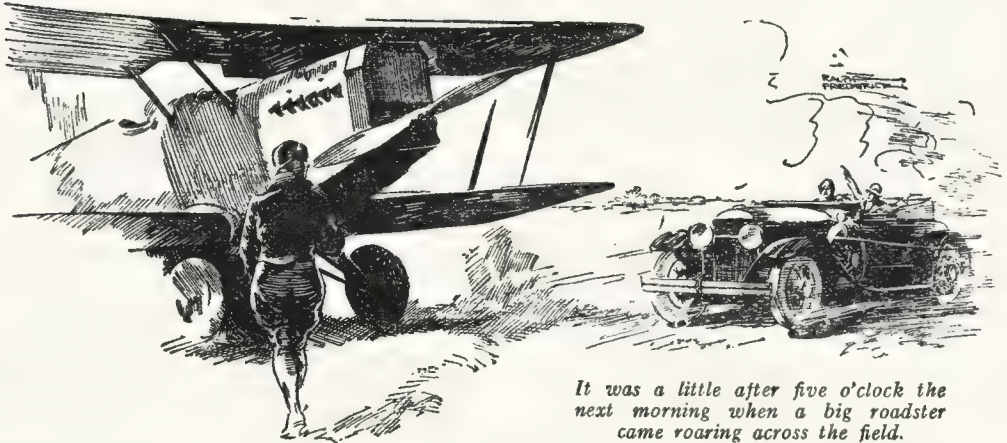
maker, but I can make them so they'll hold."

He began to take off his overalls. "I've a regular suit on under these," he announced. "Here, hold them till I get this shirt off! You put this shirt on, then put—"

"But, Tommy, what will you—"

"No remarks from passengers. Put this shirt on!"

"I won't! I'm not feeble at all, Mr. Tommy Tucker Newel. Betty told me all



It was a little after five o'clock the next morning when a big roadster came roaring across the field.

Tommy hurriedly. "Certainly there's enough of it! Well, to continue, you can wear my soft shirt and overalls—but darned if I know about shoes. Those pumps you got on wouldn't last twenty minutes on this lava, let alone climbing mountains."

"I reckon I couldn't walk very far in them," she admitted. "But—"

Sally Calvert stood up and smiled at Tommy. She was about five feet four inches tall in her high-heeled pumps and didn't weigh more than a hundred and twenty. Her hair was a blue-black and her eyes a warm dark blue—unless war had been declared, when they became the blue of Northern ice. With her creamy-white skin, dainty little nose and slim, graceful figure she looked exactly what she was—a thoroughbred Southern girl.

"But, Tommy, if it's just up to the top of the mountain—these pumps will last that long. They are plenty big enough for me even if—"

"Yeah, you could try 'er—and then we'd have to come back and—" Tommy paused. "I got it!" he said. "I'll cut that safety-belt and make you a regular pair of sandals, allee samee Mex *zapate*. I'm no shoe-

about you and—I've been 'coon-hunting with my brothers and stayed out all night and waded creeks and everything! You—Oh, give me the shirt, then! You're the most aggravating man; you're a—"

"A Maine Presbyterian Yank named Newel," interrupted Tommy sternly. "And when a Newel meets a Maryland Calvert, then—"

Sally put down the shirt. "Go on," she demanded coldly. "What happens?"

"Well, it depends. If it is a male Calvert, the Newel smacks him down, knowing he couldn't out-talk him. If a female Calvert, he—"

"He does not! Go on, what happens then?" Sally asked with forced calmness.

"Why, he—he bows very politely, like this, and says: 'My dear Miss Calvert, will you please put on my shirt and overalls without any further conversation, so that we can get out of this oven as soon as possible, before it gets worse?'"

Sally laughed. "That's where one Newel shows right good judgment!" And she reached for the shirt again.

Tommy cut the safety-belt, which was a trifle wider than her foot, measured off

her length, cut back- and side-slits, then one in front and the thin straps to go through. It was a strictly amateur job, but it put a good heavy thickness of leather under her. He demanded part of the tail of his shirt to use as wrappings, and after some argument Sally produced it, with the aid of his knife, and took off her pumps. He wrapped her feet and put the sandals on. "Now, stand up and try them," he commanded.

Sally did, and took a couple of steps. "They feel fine, Tommy," she said.

"Are they too tight?" he demanded

"No, I reckon not."

"No *reckon* about it! Are they tight?" said the inexorable Mr. Newel. "Can you wiggle your toes?"

"I don't have to— Yes, Tommy, I can."

"Now," Tommy announced, "we'll get the thermos bottle and the rest of the sandwiches and the water-bottle, and go away from here."

"But, Tommy—the airplane!"

"Darn the airplane! I was ordered to deliver you in San Francisco and I can't pack you and the airplane too! Let it stay right there. I'll send back for it if there's any way of getting it out, which I doubt like the dickens."

"But—"

"Listen, how are we going to get anywhere if you stand there *wah-wah-ing* all the time?"

"I am not *wah-wah-ing*—whatever that is—and you know it! I think you are—"

"I am—all of it, and then some! Come on—and less conversation! We got to climb that mountain."

They walked over to the right side of the little cañon, where it looked as if there was a cleared space leading up, Sally's homemade sandals coming loose every few minutes. Her little head was well in the air and she swung along—*clump, clump, clump*. The muscles of her legs must have been in good condition, because she swaggered along apparently without an effort.

"Tommy," she said suddenly, "do you think we'll see a town or something when we get to the top of the mountain?"

"I bet you," he answered cheerfully. "And if we don't see anything but some more mountains we'll head due west, and sooner or later we'll hit the old Pacific Ocean smack on the nose."

"The Pacific Ocean!" Sally stopped. "Tommy Newel, you seem to think it's funny!"

"Everything is funny," answered Tommy firmly; "and if you don't keep on walking, old settler, *you'll* think it's funny, when old Mr. Sun gets to heating this stove this afternoon!"

THEY reached the comb of the mountain about four o'clock. The clear-looking place had turned out to be the path of a snowslide, that had taken all timber and loose rock with it and reached almost to the top. They'd climb a hundred feet, stop and rest, then make another hundred. Some places were so steep that Tommy had to pull Sally up, sandals and all. She never whimpered, though by the time they made it she was evidently all in. Having arrived, they looked all around, and couldn't see a thing except more mountains. Sally looked carefully around all points of the compass, then slid down on a convenient rock. "Well," she said crossly, "where's your old town?"

"My gosh!" said Tommy; "they must have moved it back over the next mountain. I left it here last night."

"I—I don't see anything f-funny in it! My feet hurt me in these darn' old sandals of yours and I'm thirsty again. Are we lost, Tommy? Tell me!"

"We're not lost, as I've already pointed out—the town is lost! That's nothing; all flyers lose towns every once in awhile. Here's the water, Sally. Don't drink any more than you have to."

"Don't? Why, Tommy! Do you mean that we might not find any water? Tommy—are we really lost? You tell me right away!"

"I just told you we weren't lost! The town is lost, and of course we'll find it. See—we can blame' near slide down the mountain on this side, and the next isn't nearly as high."

"Tommy—my feet hurt me."

"The wrapping has slipped, I guess. Here, hold them up and I'll fix them for you."

The wrappings had slipped in several places and what was left of the foot of the sheer silk stocking was in shreds.

"Holy mackinaw!" said Tommy. "Look at your heels! I ought to have packed you on my back."

"Up that mountain? Don't be silly. Get the other one off, Tommy. It hurts worse." And the tears came in her eyes.

"Never mind," Tommy coaxed. "See, put the wet part around the sore places."

And he wet the cloths with the greater part of what water was left.

"I don't care about my feet," Sally said. "I've been s-skinned, out hunting before. It's because I've missed them and now I'll have to—" She made a little gesture as if for a handkerchief.

Tommy promptly handed her his and sat down on the rock beside her and without any further remarks put his arm around her. "Now, go ahead and cry all you want to," he said. "It's too bad about everything—but you're absolutely all right, and you'll be home with them, or back with Betty Howard before you know it."

"I—I know we're lost and you're just trying to make it easy for me because I'm a girl, and—" Sally confided tremulously to his shoulder.

"Nothing of the kind," said Tommy stoutly. "Any female Calvert has a right to cry once on top of a strange mountain! My goodness, is that all you can cry? Don't tell me you're stopping already? Go on, cry some more for your old Uncle Thomas!"

Sally stopped and began to laugh a little; then her head came up and she wiggled out of Tommy's arm and began dabbing her eyes with the handkerchief.

"I don't care," she said, rather defiantly, "I feel a lot better, anyway! My feet don't hurt me—much. It's all so—so funny. I start for San Francisco and I end up in the mountains; and then I cry on the shoulder of a perfect stranger!"

"You do what?" demanded Tommy. "Oh, my persecuted race! What did I do with your pumps?"

"What? Why, I gave them to you to put in your pocket! Thomas Newel, if you've lost my pumps—"

"Nothing is lost if you know where it is. I remember now that I laid them down on the ground when I started to wrap you."

"Well," said Sally, "the stockings are all torn and the pumps might as well be lost. Tommy, please tell me truly, just what are we going to do? I'm all right now, honest."

"Here it is, then. First, I don't know just what part of this range we're in. How far from anywhere or any place we are, I don't know. We might be days away from any ranch or town or we might be just over the mountain from one. Water is plentiful—when you find it—and there's lots of springs. Only thing to do is to walk along, taking it easy. Sooner or later we'll hit a

mine or a ranch in the foothills. Get it out of that bobbed head of yours that there is any danger, for there isn't. I have plenty of matches, there's lots of small game around, and I'm a peach of a shot with a rock. It's your feet that bother me, but we can rest until they're healed up. It's summer and the nights are warm down in the valley. All you've got to do is to keep your belt tight, as a Calvert should, and we'll come out all right. And, by gosh," he continued, "to wind up the oration I've just delivered: If you can't tighten it, I'll tighten it for you! Betty put you in my custody to deliver in San Francisco—and by the Nine Red Gods you're going to get there!"

SALLY listened gravely, her eyes intent on him. When he got to the part about the belt-tightening her eyes began to get steely, and when he said, "I'll tighten it for you," she arrived!

"Thank you very much, Mr. Newel," she began icily, "for your extremely lucid statement of our position. You've made it quite plain that you are acting in an official capacity only. You need not worry about my breaking down again or—keeping my belt tight, I think you said. I am very sorry to be such a—"

"Help!" Tommy interrupted, with a disarming grin. "You don't know what it means for me to have you along. Just suppose I landed down there all by myself and had to walk out all alone!"

Sally smiled. "I think that's much better, Tommy. I know you're doing all you can to—"

"We ought to be on our way right now, and here we sit! Listen, Sally, would you be afraid to sit right here while I climbed that next mountain? If there isn't anything in sight we can ease over between those two big ones on the left. It will give your feet a chance to get better."

"Why, no, Tommy, of course not. Only—if anything happened to you, what would I do?"

"Well, darned if I know! That suggestion is out, then. Better stick together."

"I think so, too," declared Sally.

"All right, then; let's get started." Tommy stopped and stared below, over to the left. "Sally, come here and look at the top of that mountain—no, not that one! Look along my finger, now, follow it down. What's that?"

"Tommy Newel! It's the roof of a cabin

or a house or something. No—yes, it is, Tommy! Oh, I'm awfully glad!"

"Don't be too darn' glad aill at once. It may be an old prospector's shack, abandoned, or some old ranch-house."

"I don't care—it's a house, anyway."

There was a spring about a hundred yards down; here they stopped and filled the bottles, and bathed their faces.

Tommy carried Sally over one or two rough places and they reached the place where the roof was at about five o'clock. It was a cabin, well made of fitted logs, set back against one of the hills, a little mountain-stream alongside and a garden up the slope to the rear. The door was shut, but just below a string that was hanging out of a little hole at one side there was a sign tacked which read: "*Pull the string—bar door. Grub in cupboard—more in lean-to. Wood in the fire-box. Put out fires when you go. —Red River Cannon.*"

Sally read the sign; then she said: "Tommy, does that mean we can go right in?"

"Yeah, boy," answered Tommy, pulling the string; "hear that bar go up? The door is open, old-timer. All Mr. Red River Cannon wants us to do is to be sure and put the fire out when we leave."

It was a big one-room cabin, with bunks built along the wall on two sides, one above the other, two on a side. There was a cook-stove, some old grass rugs, two or three rockers and straight-backed chairs, all immaculately clean. Sally stood in the center and looked around; then, seeing a rocker, she promptly went over and sat down.

"Now what'll we do, Tommy?"

"First thing to do is to get your feet fixed up," answered Tommy. "Second, get something to eat."

"But, Tommy—are you sure we can use all these things and everything?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. You sit still and I'll build a fire and get some hot water for you." Tommy saw a medicine-cabinet over on one wall. He opened it. "My gosh, here's everything that a regular drug-store has, I bet you! This bird is sure hooked up right."

He built a fire, put some water on, then said, "Now, Sally, you get fixed up. There's a pair of slippers sticking out from under that bunk—or here, I'll get them for you! Now I'll take a look-see outside."

IT was perhaps half an hour later that Sally came shuffling out, wearing the big old carpet-slippers.

"I feel fine now, Tommy," she announced. "Isn't it lovely here? I wonder when Mr. Red River Cannon will be back? Do you reckon he'll be back tonight?"

"Darned if I know; maybe-so, and maybe not for a month. If he brought that stove and stuff up here it's a cinch there's a road out, and when you're all rested up and everything we'll head down it."

Sally sat down on the bench beside Tommy. "I took off your flying-suit and your shirt, Tommy," she said; "what there was left of it."

"I see you did. Well, all we have to do now is just stick around and eat and rest until we feel like hitting the trail."

"Tommy, I—I can't cook and—"

"What? And you a Calvert? My gosh, I thought all the Calvert women were fine cooks! Here I was figuring on fried chicken and hot biscuits and cornbread and—"

"You can stop right there, Mr. Thomas Newell! I'm hungry enough right now. And most of the Calverts *are* mighty fine cooks—but old Aunt Jinny did all our cooking and she was so old and fussy that we didn't get a chance to—"

"Well, I see that I will have to be chief cook and bottle-washer in this outfit. I'm the best cook south of Fifty-nine. You stick around out here and I'll go in and get supper. You'll eat some sourdough biscuits in a little while, woman, that will make you tell your grandma's real name."

"Oh, Tommy, can you really cook? I think I'll go in and watch you. I—I know I *ought* to be able to cook, Tommy."

"Why? There's no reason why you should. Only if you ever get off on a camping-trip, or lose all your money, it's a good thing to know how to do. Come on, Miss Calvert, I'll teach you how to make biscuits."

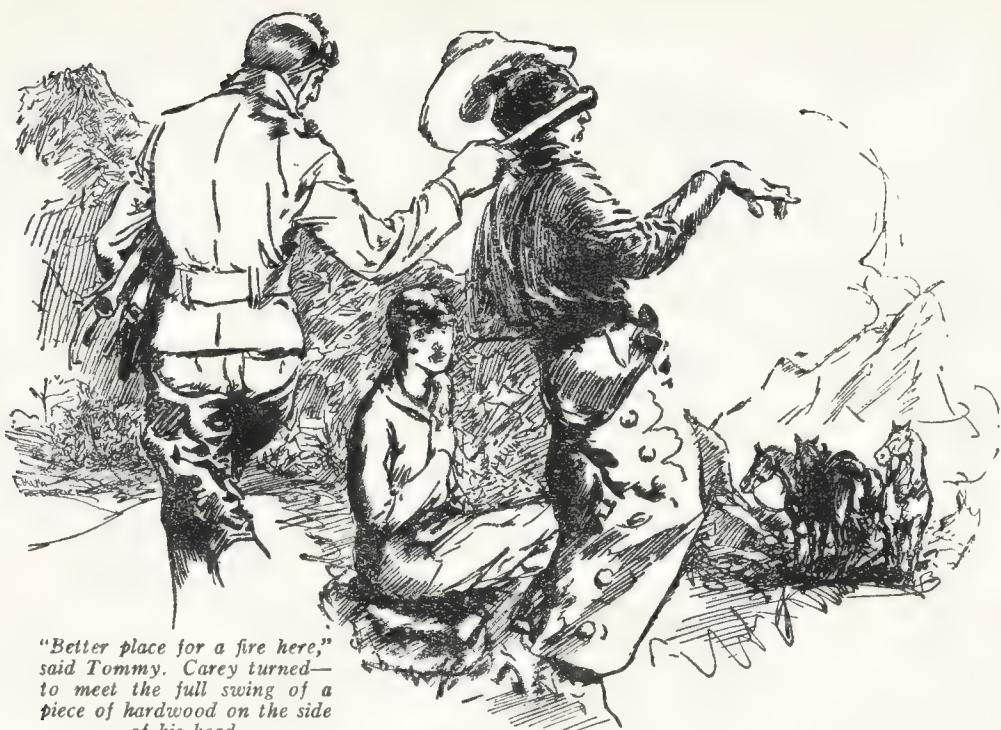
After supper they sat again on the bench in front and watched the stars come out and shine through the clear dry air.

"It's beautiful, isn't it, Tommy?" said Sally, rather sleepily. "I'd love to stay up here all summer, wouldn't you?"

"I bet you," answered Tommy. "With a gun and a fishing-rod—and just do nothing but eat and fish and hunt!"

"And sleep a little, too," added Sally, trying hard to hide behind a dainty hand a yawn that just would come.

"That reminds me," said Tommy, "that it's about bedtime for small girls. Where is your Pullman ticket?"



"Better place for a fire here," said Tommy. Carey turned—to meet the full swing of a piece of hardwood on the side of his head.

"My Pullman ticket?" asked Sally, with a smile. "Here it is, Mr. Conductor," and she gravely handed Tommy an imaginary ticket.

Tommy took it. "Lower six—car four—twenty," he read; "El Paso to San Francisco! All right, madam; do you wish your berth made up now?"

"Yes, conductor, please. By the way, what time does this train reach San Francisco?"

"This train is a special, madam, and the time is uncertain. Just as soon as possible, I assure you."

"That's quite satisfactory, conductor."

"Very well, I'll go and have the porter attend to it right away. Let me caution you about sticking your head out of the window in my absence."

Sally laughed gayly. "I wont, Mr. Conductor," she promised.

When Tommy called her she found that he had stretched two of the blankets down from the top bunk on one side in a very good imitation of Pullman curtains.

"Lady," he said, "dis yere upper aint taken tonight and you-all gits de section and all de blankets—yassum! Lady, is you-all from de South?"

"What is your name, porter?" asked Sally.

"Lady, mah name is Henry Livingston Dunwoody—but mostly I gits called

Henry. Dat nigger in car five he say dat he bet you-all was from de South and—"

"Boy," said Sally, "you talk too much! All the Dunwoody colored folks do. You get this berth ready, Henry, and—"

"Yassum; it's ready. I knowed you-all was—"

"Oh, Tommy," interrupted Sally, stepping suddenly out of character, "isn't it lovely to be warm and safe, and inside, and have plenty to eat and everything?"

"Yeah, boy! You go to bed, Sally. I'm going to sit outside and smoke my last cigarette, darn it. I wish Red River had thought to leave some out."

"Oh, what lovely, warm, clean blankets," came a voice from behind the curtains.

"They are fine, aren't they? Good night, Sally. Get a good rest. This train is in charge of the famous railroader Thomas Tucker Newel, and it will arrive safely; don't worry."

"Better known as Tommy Tucker," came a sleepy voice. "I—I wish—"

"Just for that Tommy Tucker stuff," said Tommy from the doorway, "you'll cook your own breakfast or eat bacon and point, woman."

"Why, Thomas! Is that a nice boy? Talk—" The rest trailed off in deep silence. Tommy grinned; he knew that the worthy descendant of the fighting Calverts had gone promptly to sleep.

THE next morning Sally was awakened by the smell of frying bacon and hot coffee.

"Good morning, Sarah," said Tommy from the stove. "Just in time! Rise and shine."

"You better not call me Sarah," said Sally, her lovely sleep-flushed face smiling from between the curtains. "If you do, I'll call you Tommy Tucker and everything! Oh, Tommy, that bacon smells awfully good! I'm as hungry as anything. I slept just as sound. What time is it? My feet are all well, Tommy."

"It is good," answered Tommy. "I'm glad you're hungry. It's nine o'clock. I knew you were sleeping, so out of the goodness of my heart I let you ramble until long over the last call for breakfast on this special. Slide out of that berth and get ready. This bacon is almost done."

"I will, Tommy. Isn't the air fresh and—"

"Less 'I-willing' and more sliding," interrupted Tommy sternly; "unless you want to eat burned bacon."

"I don't reckon I'd care for it," answered Sally. "I'll hurry, Tommy."

AFTER breakfast they went out and sat on the bench. Sally leaned back against the log wall and sighed happily.

"Isn't it beautiful here, Tommy? Look at those lovely mountains! What are we going to do now?"

"Sit right where we are," answered Tommy lazily.

"I meant as soon as we're all rested and everything. Tommy, haven't you any curiosity to know why I had to get to San Francisco right away and—"

"Who—me?" questioned Tommy, making a careful search for a possible cigarette tucked away in some pocket, but without any success. "Yeah, boy, I'm almost plumb crazy with it. Last night I was wandering around all over those mountains hollering: 'Why did she want to get to San Francisco? Why did she want to get to San Francisco?'"

"It isn't a joking matter with me, Mr. Thomas Newel," began Sally hotly. "You may think it's funny, but I don't! You don't know what it means to—"

"Betty said that same thing yesterday morning. How could I know what it means when no one tells me? Go on, tell your old Uncle Thomas. Here, I'll ask you: How come you wanted to get to San

Francisco, Miss Sarah Calvert; and how come you galumphing onto my flying-field at five o'clock in the morning all het up, with that darn' Betty Howard; and who are you going to meet, and why have you got to meet them? What boat sails, and where?"

"Now," said Miss Calvert, determinedly, "I'll not tell you a single thing—ever!"

"By gosh, you will!"

"I won't! You are the—"

"I am not—whatever you were going to call me! I deny it. And you'll cook your own supper, and your own breakfast the next morning, and so forth, *ad lib.*, world without end, until death do us part—or words to that effect."

"Thomas Tucker Newel, you stop teasing me right away. You ought to be worrying about how to get us out of here, but instead of that you—"

"I *am* worrying," interrupted Tommy; "I'm worrying like the dickens, only I don't show it. It's a deep, far-down kind of a worry that don't show on the surface at all. It's the kind of a worry that—" He stopped, the expression in Sally's eyes warning him that he'd better. "Listen, old-timer," he went on with his disarming grin, "soon as your feet get all healed for sure, we'll go and find the trail that Mr. Red River Cannon used to get the big cookstove and all the rest up here and follow it down to the railroad. When we get to the railroad we'll take a train to San Francisco and everything will turn out all right; you wait and see. Smile for Tommy—like a good girl."

Sally tried not to, but she couldn't help just one little smile.

"If it weren't for—I know you're doing everything you can, Tommy, and I—I—"

"Keep your belt tight," warned Tommy hastily; he had seen her dark blue eyes begin to get a little misty. "You're all right, Sally. Nothing in the world is going to happen to you at any time, that you don't want to have happen—leave it to your Uncle Thomas Tucker Newel."

"M-m-my belt is tight," answered Sally. "But, Tommy, supposing it's a long ways to the town and we don't—and this Red River Cannon comes home and doesn't like to have us here and—"

"That's four *ands*, which is plenty! If he don't like us I'll shoot him with the water-bottle. I thought you said your belt was tight? It sounds as if it were pretty loose, to me!"

"You—I don't have to—" Sally began, in her eyes the light of battle taking the place of the mistiness—which was what Tommy wanted.

"An' you a Calvert!" Tommy continued. "All the Calverts were afraid to get more than four miles from Baltimore—if they got caught out after dark they ran for home."

HE succeeded better than he had anticipated. Sally sat up straight. "What! A Calvert afraid to— You are nothing in the world but a—a darned old Maine Yankee, just like all the—"

"My great-great-grandpa, the Presbyter-ian elder I spoke about," went on Tommy, "wrote a long story about the Calverts. He said that every time a Calvert got caught out after dark they jumped from crag to crag uttering plaintive yelps for a Newel to come down from Maine and rescue them. Your name is Crier—not Calvert."

"What did you say my name was, Mr. Newel?" demanded Sally haughtily.

Tommy thought it wiser to retreat a little. "Your name?" he inquired politely. "Why, I have heard it, I'm quite sure. Don't tell me, now—let me guess it, please! Your name is Sarah Calvert, and you are called Sally Calvert by all that know you. At ease—like a good girl."

"What did you say the Calverts did?" went on Sally, unappeased.

"Now that I come to think seriously about it, Tommy answered hastily, "it wasn't the Calverts at all that my great-great-grandpa referred to in his famous story. It was a family named Crier, not Calvert; and absolutely no relation at all. The names are somewhat similar, though—don't you think so, Miss Calvert?"

"No, I don't. Then it wasn't the Calverts that—what did you say they did?"

"Jumped from crag to crag," supplied Tommy, blandly, "uttering plaintive yelps for help. No—it wasn't the Calverts. I remember now that my great-and-so-forth-grandpa always said that the Calverts were found thousands of miles away from home after dark. In fact, he said they never did know when to go home."

Sally laughed. "Tommy Newel, you are the— Tommy! Look at the side of that mountain! No—not that one; see—on the left; there's horses, about halfway up!"

"That's right, Sally! Three of them, and— Yeah, a man on the first one. Bet you that Red River is coming home."

"Oh, look! He's turning and—"

"He's tacking, Sally. The mountain is too steep to come straight down. He zig-zags down, like a boat tacks. He'll be here in an hour anyway."

They sat and watched the little outfit come in closer after each tack, and within an hour, a man leading two pack-horses rode up to the cabin. He was a young man, heavily built and not bad-looking. He was deeply tanned and around his waist was strapped a belt of cartridges from which swung a heavy revolver in a worn snakeskin holster. His eyes were a very light blue and almost expressionless. He sat in his saddle and looked at Sally and Tommy, who had risen as he came around the corner of the cabin.

"Howdy," he said gravely.

"Howdy," they both answered. The young man looked at them, apparently trying to figure out their presence. Finally he said, "Red River around?"

"No," answered Tommy. "We arrived yesterday afternoon and found his sign on the door."

"You would," said the young man gravely, his eyes on Sally. "Well, that's plumb too bad. I aimed on seeing him before I drifted across the line. I passed a wrecked airplane back over in the lava-bed. Was that yours?"

"Yes," said Tommy shortly. "Now that you are here you can tell us where the nearest town is, and how to get there." He didn't like the way the man was staring at Sally, or the expression that had come in the pale-blue eyes.

The young man turned and looked at Tommy, his eyes resting for a moment on the bulge made by the water-bottle in Tommy's coat pocket.

"The nearest town," he drawled, "is Flagstaff, twenty miles west and south. I'm going to within almost sightin' distance of it. Yore lady here can ride one of these here pack-hosses—or my hoss, if she can sit him. I'd sure admire some hot chuck though, before we start; and I left something with Red River that I want to get." And the young man swung down from the saddle. "My name is Carey," he announced; "mostly called Star Carey."

"Why, of course we'll wait, Mr. Carey," said Sally with a charming smile. "I am Sarah Calvert, and this is Mr. Thomas Newel. We're glad to see anyone that—"

"I'll go and put the coffee on," interrupted Tommy. "Sally, you talk to Mr. Carey while I get—"

"I said that mostly I was called Star," broke in the young man.

"Fair enough," agreed Tommy smoothly. "You stay and talk to Star, Sally, and I'll get something to eat."

"Tommy," Sally announced, when they came in at his call, "Star says that Red River Cannon buys lots of moccasins from the Indians down on the reservation, and that if he hasn't taken them all to town with him, there might be a pair that would fit me. He's going to look, after lunch."

"That's good," answered Tommy. "Let's eat now, and then we'll get hooked up for the march."

CAREY excused himself for a moment, and after he went out Sally whispered quickly: "I don't like him, Tommy! Did you see the way he looked at me? As if I were—I were—"

"Yeah, I noticed. Listen, Sally, you follow quick any play I make, no matter how funny it may seem, or how strange it may look to you."

"Of course I will, Tommy," said Sally simply.

When Carey came back and sat down it was plain to be seen that he had been heavily sampling Red River's supply of whisky; but he was gravely polite to both Sally and Tommy, telling them he was on his way to work a claim in old Mexico in the Yaqui Indian country. After lunch he found a little bundle of moccasins and Sally selected a small pair which fitted her slender feet fairly well. Carey rearranged one of the packs and Sally, assisted by Tommy, climbed up on the horse. Carey rode in front, then Sally, then the other pack-horse, followed by Tommy, walking. It was slow going, Carey setting the pace. At first he tried to conceal the fact that he was drinking out of a bottle which he produced from his saddle-bags, but along toward noon he was drinking openly. He called to Tommy and offered him a drink, but Tommy replied that he was temporarily on the wagon.

Beside a little spring, Carey pulled up and waited for Tommy to catch up to him.

"We camp here," Carey said shortly. "This here hoss of mine is goin' lame."

"All right," Tommy answered cheerfully. "The horse has nothing on me. I feel kind of lame myself. Unload, Sally!"

Carey looked at him gravely. "Yeah?" he said, as he dismounted. "Well, that's shore too bad, feller!"

Sally looked questioningly at Tommy, as

he helped her down, and Tommy grinned cheerfully at her.

"I'm cook of this outfit," he announced. "You two sit down. I'll rustle some wood and we'll have a regular meal in about two minutes."

"Yeah?" said Carey again. "Aint he a helpin' little hand?" he added, coming up to where Sally was sitting.

Sally's lips tightened just a little. Not much, not near enough for Carey to notice, but Tommy saw it and said hastily: "Sally, tell Star about how we cracked up, while I get some wood."

"I want a drink of water, first thing," answered Sally.

"Hey, get some water, you," Carey commanded.

Sally's eyes opened a little at the tone of voice—and still wider as Tommy answered meekly, "Right away, Star!"

Carey laughed and drank again from the bottle. "That's a good little boy," he sneered openly.

When Tommy brought the water, Sally tasted it. "Why, I don't want that water," she said. "It doesn't taste near as good as the water at the cabin! Tommy, you filled the water-bottle, didn't you, before we left? Give me a drink of *that* water."

"I must have left it in the cabin," Tommy answered.

"No, you didn't, Tommy! It's in your pocket—see?"

Tommy laughed wryly and brought out the water-bottle. "By gosh, so I did! I didn't remember where I put it!"

Carey looked at Tommy, and at the water-bottle. "Not so bad, feller," he drawled. "You shore had me guessin' plenty!" And he swung his gun-holster around a little in front. "Go on; get busy before I—"

Sally stiffened and her head went up; she realized too late what she had done. Then she smiled at Carey.

"Why, Star," she said, "did you think he had a gun? My goodness gracious, what would he need a gun for? Especially as long as *you're* here now!"

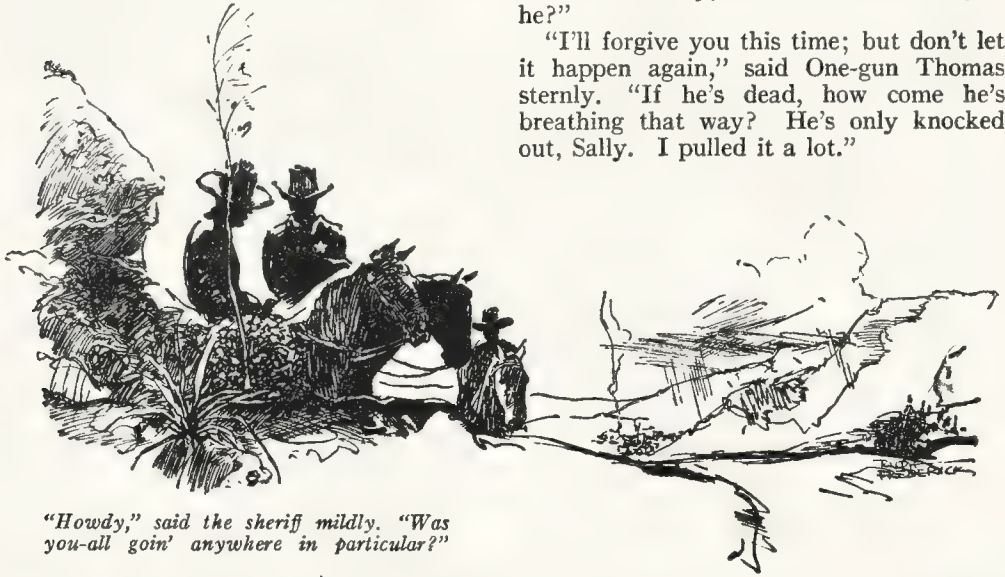
"Yessum," agreed Carey. "I can handle most anything that comes. Don't you want a little drink, Sally?"

"Not now; after lunch, perhaps. I—"

Tommy came back with an armful of wood. "Ready in a minute, now. I'll get one more load." He dropped the wood in front of Carey, and started back to a little windfall near the spring. Carey watched

him for a moment; then he announced: "Do you know what I'm goin' to do with that jasper? I'm goin' to take him down to some Mex' friends of mine below here that'll keep him safe—and then you and me'll take a little *pasear* over into Mexico! How's that?"

"Why," said Sally, with a little laugh, "I'm afraid that a good many of our people might object and—"



"Howdy," said the sheriff mildly. "Was you-all goin' anywhere in particular?"

"Aw, how will they know? They might find your plane and that's all. There's been lots of people lost for keeps in this range. I'll take a chance—"

TOMMY was coming back with another load of wood. This time he walked behind Carey. "Better place for a fire here," he said. "I'll build it back—" As he spoke, Carey turned—to meet the full swing of a short piece of hardwood on the side of his head. He slumped slowly to the ground.

"Oh!" gasped Sally. "You— Tommy, you hit him!"

"Darn' right I did," said Tommy firmly. "I heard part of that Mexico stuff. I had a feelin' that it was going to be hit or get hit very soon. Go and get me one of those pack-ropes—no, there's one hanging on his saddle. I'll tie our little friend up while the going is good. First, though, I'll—" He stooped and removed the gun and belt, and felt the sleeping Carey over carefully for any other guns or knives. Gravely Tommy buckled on the belt.

"I now," he remarked, "cease to be the famous railroader, Mr. Thomas Tucker Newel, and at once become One-gun Thomas, the terror of the range! Make it snappy with that rope, woman, before I abduct you into Mexico and everything! And something else: what do you mean by giving away the fact that my gun was a water-bottle—and you a Calvert?"

"Oh, Tommy, I'm so sorry I did; honest I am! Tommy, he isn't—isn't dead, is he?"

"I'll forgive you this time; but don't let it happen again," said One-gun Thomas sternly. "If he's dead, how come he's breathing that way? He's only knocked out, Sally. I pulled it a lot."

"It didn't look like it to me," said Sally. "It was so fast that I couldn't see it."

Tommy bound Carey securely with the lariat, and with much effort hoisted him on the pack-horse Sally had been riding. "We will now proceed on our journey," he announced, "—the cavalry having been made infantry—with the prisoners of war."

"Tommy," asked Sally, after they got started,—Tommy leading Carey's horse, which she had refused to ride,—"what are we going to do with him?"

"Darned if I know," answered Tommy cheerfully. "Get near the town and turn him loose, I guess! I'll leave his gun and belt, and fix the rope so that he can untie himself in an hour or so. If he comes into town after me maybe-so I can collect a gun before he gets in."

"Tommy, do you think he really would have tried to—to do what he said?"

"I don't know that, either. All I know is that at this moment he certainly has no chance to do it, if he *wasn't* foolin'. I don't get that kind of joking hardly any."

"I don't either, Tommy," said Sally,

walking as close to him as she could get on the trail. "Tommy, I think you're the— Oh, he's waking up!"

Tommy handed Sally the reins of Carey's horse and walked up to the pack-horse. Carey was now fully awake, but swaying a little. "What happened?" he demanded thickly. "What the livin' hell-and-high-water am I doin' tied here?"

"Why," said Tommy, with a grin, "you fell, back there at the camp, and hurt your head. I took your gun and belt off because they were too heavy for you, and I tied you on so you wouldn't fall off."

Carey's eyes cleared and he looked at the grave-faced young man. "Yeah?" he said. "I'd like a drink right well."

"Which you wont get," answered Tommy. "Drink is your curse, feller," he added.

"That's right," agreed Carey. "I knew all the time I was making a mistake lettin' you ramble—I ought to have plugged you up at Red River's. You're there, feller! What's the play, now?"

Tommy told him what he had told Sally. Carey nodded. "Fair enough," he said. "An' when I get loose, I'm comin' in and fog you up!"

"By that time," answered Tommy politely, "it may be barely possible that I will be in a position to do some of that fogging stuff myself."

He rejoined Sally, and the little cavalcade went slowly along. Carey made no further attempt to talk, but rode stolidly along, his head hanging.

Not more than five miles farther on, the trail suddenly turned a little foothill and below them, two or three miles away, they saw the houses of a little town, and steel rails shining in the sun. "Here's where we unload Mr. Carey," said Tommy. "Hold these, Sally!"

AT this moment three men rode into the trail from the left. One of them was a wrinkled, deeply tanned, kind-faced man with a badge that read "Sheriff" pinned on his flannel shirt. The other two were much younger; all three sat their saddles as if they had been in them since birth. The older man looked at Tommy, at Carey, then at Sally. When his keen eyes rested on her, he smiled and took off his wide-brimmed hat, an action at once followed by the two young men.

"Howdy," the sheriff said mildly. "Was you-all goin' anywhere in particular?"

"Why, Sheriff," answered Sally, with a

gay little smile, "I reckon that you know all about it, right now."

"Yassum," he agreed, smiling back, "we sure do know some of it. This here Star Carey met up with you-all and began to act ornery—and you-all took his gun away from him. We sure can see that much!"

One of the young men laughed. "How come, Star?" he asked. "I thought you was the jasper that never gave up his gun."

Sally looked at Carey, who now looked sick, the effect of the whisky having died out in him—and saw the big bump on the side of his head.

Suddenly her little head went up. "Mr. Star Carey found us at Mr. Red River Cannon's cabin," she said, "and he rode with us to show us where the town was. When we camped for noon he became sick and—and Mr. Newel took his gun off because it was—was so heavy, and we tied him on the horse so that he wouldn't fall off. Didn't we, Tommy?"

"We sure did," said Tommy. "That's exactly how it was, Sheriff!" And Tommy grinned at the old gun-fighter, who, after a glance at him through narrowed eyes, grinned slowly in return.

"I'm shore right glad to hear that it was thataway," he said. "Because if it was anything else I'd have to take him in. This Star Carey aint bad till he gets a little red licker in him. Where you driftin', Star?"

"Across the line," answered Carey, "to do some work on my claims down in the Yaqui country."

"Yeah? Well, if you-all feel smart enough to travel, and this here gentleman will give you back yore six-gun, I reckon that you better keep right on goin'."

"Untie me," said Carey. "I'll go."

He turned to where he could see Sally.

"I—I'm— It was the licker in me talkin', Miss Sally," he said. "I didn't mean no—"

"Why, Star Carey," said Sally with apparent indignation, "do you mean to say that if you hadn't been drinking—er—red licker, that you wouldn't think I was a— a pretty girl, at all?"

They all laughed; Carey tried to smile.

"Yassum—I mean no'm— Aw, untie me and let me fog outta here!"

The sheriff took Sally to his buxom old wife—who after one glance at the girl took her literally to her ample bosom—while Tommy made arrangements to have a party go out and bring in all they could of the plane.

THAT evening he sat on the wide gallery of the sheriff's house with Sally. There was a train at midnight for the junction where they could get the San Francisco express. Sally had been promptly marched by Mrs. Sheriff down to the general store and provided with a pair of shoes that came within one size at least of fitting her.

"Tommy," said Sally, "what are we going to do after we get to San Francisco? My sister has sailed and—"

"That reminds me," interrupted Tommy, from his position in a woven-grass hammock, close to Sally's rocker; "you never told me the how-come-you-thusly stuff."

"Well, I started to tell you, and you began to tease me, and—"

"Only to keep the fighting Calvert blood het up until I got you somewhere that you'd be safe. You've arrived, woman! Here you are in the sheriff's house, and everything. So now you can proceed with all the plaintive sobbing you—"

"Thomas Tucker Newel! You dare to start that again! I— Please, Tommy, be nice to me! I—I'm in an awful fix!"

"No, you're not—not as long as you're with me," said Tommy. "Here's you and here's me—there is no fix that you can be in, that I can't get you out of! I won't tease you again, honest Injun."

"Well, I— Tommy, that night at the dance when I told Betty, she said I was a little fool, and the only thing to do was—"

"Betty said that? Well, doggone her—"

"Will you listen to me instead of interrupting all the time?"

"Yassum, I will," answered Tommy, grinning. "Proceed with the sad story. All I have to date is that Betty said that you were a little fool, and that—"

"I told you once before," said Sally, "that if you acted that way I wouldn't tell you a thing—and now I won't."

"Go on, Sally, tell me! I'll keep still."

"Well, I *shouldn't*—after the way you've been acting! It was—I live with my aunt, Tommy, because my father and mother are dead, and my sister is married to a Navy man; and my aunt wanted me to marry a man because he had lots of money, and I was afraid that she would persuade me to do it, and I didn't want to because—"

"HOLD it just a minute," interrupted Tommy. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but it's getting too scrambled for me. Besides you need a new breath, I bet you. Do you mean to say that anyone could—"

"You did interrupt me," Sally said crossly; "after you said you wouldn't. I was telling you."

"Yeah, I know. Do you mean to sit there and tell me that anyone could persuade you into marrying a man you didn't want to? My gosh! And you a Maryland—I'll take it back! Go on."

"I don't intend to go on," answered Sally decisively. "I reckon if you lived with my aunt you wouldn't be so snippy. You don't know her."

"That's right," agreed Tommy, "I don't. Maybe-so that would make a difference. Who was in San Francisco—your sister?"

"Yes—and she wrote me that if I'd get there before the boat sailed, I could go to Japan with them, and—"

"I'M glad that connecting-rod broke," said Tommy. "The Nine Red Gods were sure looking after—"

"What has that got to do with it? Betty said you could get me there in time and— Tommy Newel, are you listening to me?"

"Certainly I'm listening to you," answered Tommy with extreme dignity. "Do I look as if I was asleep or something?"

"No, but you weren't listening; I know it!"

"The sheriff told me this afternoon," began Tommy, looking at the mountains, "that Red River Cannon had gone away for a month, and had left the cabin in his charge. He said that it would be all right if any one wanted to stay up there a little while and that they could pay Red River when he came back."

"Why, Tommy! What has that got to do with us?"

"Not a thing—only I was just thinking. You've missed your sister, and you don't want to marry the man your aunt picked out, and—" Tommy stopped.

"Go on, Tommy," said Sally softly. "What are you stopping for?"

"I could send word for another man to bring a bus over for Auntie to look me over—and—there's a minister here and—"

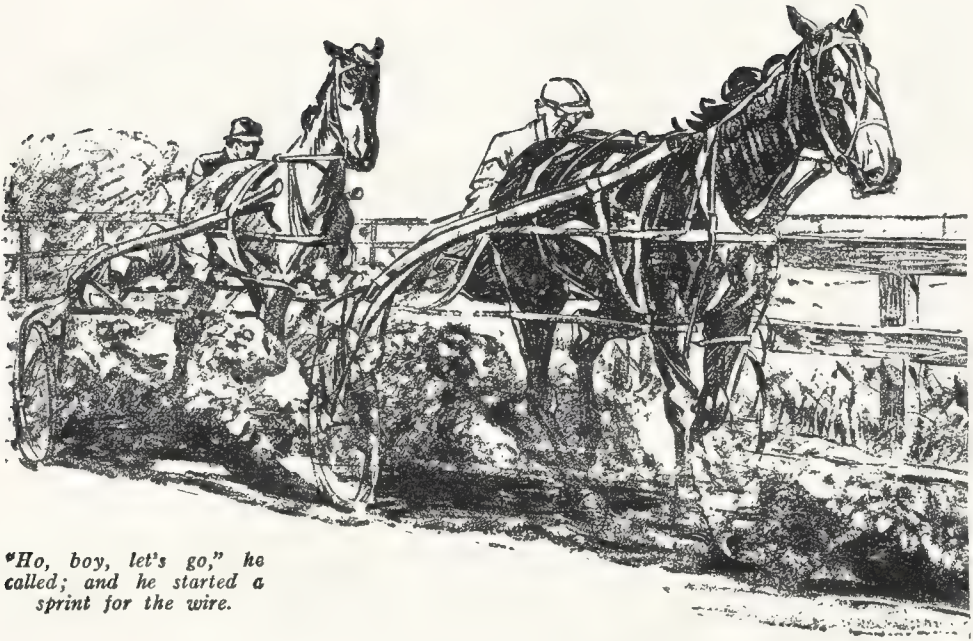
"Thomas Newel! You look at me! Are you trying to—to—"

"Yassum, that's exactly what I am."

"Then," said Sally Calvert, rising, "you come over here right away and do it!"

Tommy obeyed promptly. "I love you, Sally Calvert," he said, as he reached her side.

"I—I love you too, Tommy Tucker!" Sally had just time to say.



"Ho, boy, let's go," he called; and he started a sprint for the wire.

Tails, We Win

A specially engaging tale of the trotting track, by the gifted sports-writer who gave us "Double Gaited," "Horse Tracks," and many other good ones.

By JONATHAN BROOKS

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

IT started at a dispersal sale of Charles W. Mortimer's trotters in the auction barn at the fair grounds. All the horses had been sold but one, a three-year-old sorrel colt called Charley Dillon, and Colonel Shaw, the auctioneer, was finishing his ballyhoo.

"Now, men, we've saved the best for the last," shouted Colonel Shaw. "Here we have a great colt trotting prospect, Charley Dillon, one of the last of the great Dillons. Sound, in every way. Speed to burn, for he gets his foot from both sides of his house. From the Dillons, family of world champions. His dam, Maggie Casey, she by Casey Wilkes; second dam, Maggie Chimes; third dam, Chimes Queen. Now, men, look this colt over. Watch his action while the boy leads him down the line—*what* am I offered for Charley Dillon? *Who* wants a future trotting champion, under right handling? How much?"

On one side of the auctioneer's box stood

Mortimer, sick over the cheap prices his horses had brought, hopefully awaiting some lively bidding for the colt. He scanned the faces of the men about the auctioneer, and wondered what the first offer would be. He noticed Tommy Dawson, at the other side of the auctioneer's box. The boy was a nephew of Dick Dawson, for years Mortimer's trainer.

No bids were made. The alert Colonel Shaw urged the boy leading Charley Dillon to trot him down to the end of the barn. All eyes were on the colt, appraisingly, but the attitude of the horsemen was one of distrust.

"These Dillons are as wild as chicken hawks," remarked one.

"And this one, wildest of 'em all," was the reply.

"Now, men, you see him," shouted Colonel Shaw. "Not a fault on him, not a mark. Good a prospect as ever looked through a bridle. He's been quarters as



fast as any man's colt. What do I hear? Who'll start him off?"

"Quarters!" muttered one fellow, near the box. "It takes *miles* to win races. He wont go that far without he can run. Git him a jockey."

"Float Jolly!" the auctioneer challenged. "This colt's easy worth five hundred of *your* money!"

Jolly, a widely known horseman, ignored the remark. Somebody spoke:

"Two hundred for the Dillon colt."

"Oh, my soul and body," lamented Colonel Shaw. "I am not offering a plow-horse, men. Who makes me a real offer? A real trotter, for a real price! I'm ashamed to ask for a starting bid as low as five hundred! He ought to start at a thousand, and go up from there. If Mr. Mortimer cared to continue racing, he'd show you this colt is worth many times two hundred. What do you say, for this baby—look at him, handsome as a red-haired gambler with a gold tooth! And he does as handsome as he looks! Who starts him at five?"

PERSPIRING, he belabored the crowd, but his efforts were as vain as the hopeful gaze of old man Mortimer searching for a buyer. Once more Mortimer's eye fell on Dawson, and the youngster, at the moment, was studying the old man.

Tommy shook his head, after first nodding toward the colt. The old man, thinking the boy was sympathizing with him, only stared. Again Tommy shook his head more vigorously, then made his way around the box.

"Gee whiz, Mr. Mortimer, don't *give* the colt away," he said.

"Got to get rid of 'em all," muttered Mr. Mortimer.

"Well, then *four* hundred?" queried the auctioneer. "But, men, it's a crime, a sin and a shame, I'm telling you."

"But he's worth real money," pleaded Tommy. "Uncle Dick said this colt could trot so fast it scared him to think about it."

Mortimer said nothing, feeling sicker than ever at his sacrifice.

"Keep him for awhile, Mr. Mortimer," Tommy begged. "Give him a chance at a race or two, to show what he can do. *Then* sell him, for something like what he's worth."

"That's better than giving him away," Mortimer agreed, reluctantly. "Offer three hundred for him, boy."

"Three hundred," shouted Tommy.

"And twenty-five," said the man who had offered two hundred.

"Three-fifty," Tommy yelled, after looking at Mr. Mortimer.

There the price rested, for despite Colo-

nel Shaw's eloquent appeals, he could not get another dollar out of the crowd. The matter, for the moment, was settled, and Tommy Dawson, tow-headed, big-chinned youngster of twenty-two, wondered what he had done. He was broke, out of a job for the summer, and wanted money to tide him over his last year at the State university. His only reason for looking in at the horse sale was his hope that he might sell a racing bike, a work-sulky and some harness and racing equipment left by his Uncle Dick.

"Sold!" shouted the Colonel, "and dirt cheap at the price! To Mr.—"

"Dawson," said Tommy, faintly. The auctioneer's assistant bore down on him. Suppose old man Mortimer backed out on the deal? But he need not have worried. Mortimer nudged him in the ribs, and whispered:

"Just sign that paper."

MORTIMER winked a knowing wink at the clerk, so the "sale" was easily arranged. But a little later, when the crowd had melted away, Tommy had to face old man Mortimer.

"Well, young fellow," the older man challenged gruffly. "What's your idea about my colt?"

"Why, nothing except he's got a world of speed," said Tommy. "Uncle Dick always said this colt looked the best—"

"I know that—what's *your* idea?" snapped Mortimer. "Why did you stop me from selling him?"

The sharp-faced old man seemed to regret, now, that he had yielded to impulse and Tommy's suggestion. His voice was sharp and aggressive, and the tone stirred Tommy Dawson's combative soul.

"What do you mean, *selling* him?" he retorted. "You were about to give him away, the same as the others. Two hundred for that colt—rats!"

"Well, don't think I was letting them go so cheap, just because I wanted to," Mortimer replied, testily. "I had to get rid of them. Need whatever money they'll bring, need it bad. If Dick was alive—but no, you stepped up there like you had some idea about what to do."

"If Uncle Dick was alive you'd never even have gotten that close to selling this colt," Tommy suggested.

"Yes, but he's not, and who else could bring on this colt?" demanded Mortimer peevishly. "Nobody—and here I am, in

the hole. Next time I listen to a young squirt, I don't. Auction's over, crowd's gone. Have to find a buyer myself."

LEAVING Tommy in disgust, he stalked over to the auctioneer's box, where Colonel Shaw and his helper were cleaning up the last details of the sale.

"Well, if you have to *give* him away, give him to me," Tommy called.

Then he wondered why he had made that suggestion—why he had thrust himself into old man Mortimer's affairs. Needing a job, he had blundered into a misunderstanding with one of the wealthiest men in the county! Uncle Dick always was sweet on Charley Dillon. Lots of foot, he said. Uncle Dick knew trotters—none better. Uncle Dick knew about a lot of things, including boys.

But Uncle Dick was gone, and Tommy had to shift for himself to win that fourth and last year at school. Needed a job, but there was no job in sight. . . .

Tommy left the sales barn and started across the fairground on his way to town. En route, he ran into Float Jolly, a fat, good-natured horseman known to every man and boy for miles around.

"Hi, boy," Jolly greeted him. "What's the idea, buying that wild-eyed Dillon colt?" He was joking.

"Just talked Mr. Mortimer out of giving him away." Tommy grinned. "But say, Mr. Jolly, what's his idea in throwing away all his horses?"

"Needs the money," said Jolly.

"What? He's rich," Tommy protested.

"Yes, he *is* rich, but he's awfully hard up," Jolly replied slowly. "That is, he's worth a lot, but he hasn't got anything. He's all tied up. Owns four or five farms, but farming's not so good just now. That coal mine he owns is shut down because scab mines in other states sell coal too cheap for him. And his foundry is about out of business, too. General business is slow, and—"

"I see," said Tommy. This was a new idea, the wealthy in poverty.

"When a rich guy's hard up, he's liable to be worse off than a poor man, I guess," Jolly concluded. "Anyhow, he's hard up. Gives away his horses, just about. I'd like to have that Dillon trick, if I had time to baby him along. Good colt, handled right."

"Uncle Dick said so," Tommy agreed, and went on his way. So, he reflected, rich old man Mortimer and he were in the same



boat—both of them hard up. He walked all the way into town, his mind a jumble over bad business, Charley Dillon, old man Mortimer, Uncle Dick's judgment of a colt, and the lack of jobs. But when he reached Aunt Minnie's home, he had made up his mind what he would do.

AFTER supper Tommy walked down to Main Street, and then out along it until he came to the big Mortimer place. Putting on a businesslike expression, he turned in through the iron gate and went up the long walk, between the pine trees, between the two stone dogs and past the cast-iron lion, to beard the human lion in his den. He was going to put a proposition to old Charles W. Mortimer. Jobs were scarce. He had to do something.

"Is Mr. Mortimer at home?" he asked. Somebody sat on the front porch, but it was dark and he could not see who it was. The figure rose from a chair and switched on the porch light.

"No, he is not here now," a girl's voice replied. "Why, it's Tommy Dawson!"

"Hello, Edith," Tommy smiled. "Glad to see you. I didn't know you were at home yet. When did you get back?"

"Here we go!" Edith exclaimed, flipping the half-dollar. "Tails! I win!" shouted Tommy jubilantly.

"Yesterday; and how long have you been free?"

"Almost a week, but I'm not free yet," grinned Tommy. "Got to slave one more year, to graduate."

"How have you been?" asked Edith, a slender little black-haired girl, with brown eyes and a straight thin nose that offset a quietly laughing mouth.

"All right. But golly, it's a long time since I've seen you," said Tommy. "Only once or twice since we left high school."

"Wont you sit down? I'll turn off this light before the bugs gather," said Edith. "Uncle's gone downtown, but he said he wouldn't be long."

"Thanks; talk over old times," murmured Tommy.

"Old times, my eye," Edith protested, as they sat down in hickory rockers. They had gone through high-school together, danced and partied together many times, as boy and girl friends, and always their spirit had been one of chaff and banter. "I want to know about new times! What is this story about your going into the horse business?"

"Who said anything—" began Tommy.

"Don't be silly—Uncle Charley," Edith exclaimed. "He said you wanted to break into the business—without a dime, and without knowing a thing about horses."

"He's two-thirds wrong," said Tommy. "I don't want to go into the business, but I *do* know something about horses. But he's right when he says I haven't got a dime!" And he grinned ruefully.

"But he said you talked about Charley Dillon—"

"Only tried to get him not to give the colt away," Tommy protested. "I couldn't buy him, nor train him either, for myself. Got to dig up some money to finish school on, myself. But I certainly hated to see him give away a good colt."

"He said you talked that way," Edith laughed. "Said you seemed to be sick about it, or something—there comes Uncle Charley now."

"GOT company, Edith?" queried the old man, as he came up the steps.

"Tom Dawson's here. I thought he was calling on me, but he asked for you."

"I suppose he wants to talk horse," said Mortimer. "After getting me to hold on to that colt, Tom, have you any idea what we can do with him?"

"Well, yes sir, I've got a proposition," Tommy replied. "That colt's worth bringing on, but he'll take all of somebody's time. I can handle him; I've got an idea."

"Shoot," said Mortimer, sitting down on the top step.

"Well, this is it," began Tommy haltingly. "You take stable space at the track, and pay feed-bills. I'll bring this colt along—"

"Want a job, hey? How much?" interrupted Mortimer sharply.

"Nothing, unless I produce," Tommy snapped. He resented the older man's overbearing aggressiveness. "I'll ready him for a good race. You give the word if you think he's right, and I'll drive him. If he wins, I split the purse, and I have the right to make a sale—also for half what he brings. How's that?"

"Fair—" But Edith's exclamation was smothered by Mortimer's reply.

"You don't want anything, do you?" he demanded, derisively. "Half my winnings, and half my colt's price! You work cheap, you do!"

"I don't work; I gamble," declared Tommy stubbornly. "I don't get a dime

all summer; and you don't, unless I make this colt a winning trotter."

"Yeah, that sounds good," interrupted Mortimer. "But I don't have to pay *that* much to make a decent sale! Look here! *You* take the stall, and buy the feed. I'll pay you five dollars a day. Then if I decide to race him I can get somebody—"

"Nothing doing," said Tommy. "I do the whole job, or none of it."

"What do you want—a whole year's pay for three months?"

"Absolutely, because I've got to produce enough for my last year at school," Tommy explained. "But it's reasonable."

"What—half any price you can get for the colt?" demanded Mortimer. The older man did not give any sign that he was dickering. But he had just been talking down town with Float Jolly, and that authority on handling horseflesh had suggested that Mortimer could look further and find worse fellows than young Dawson to handle his colt.

"Well, what do you pay an auctioneer for a sale?" Tommy demanded. "You pay him fifteen per cent, and he never does a thing to *make* the colt."

"Might consider your proposition, on a twenty-five per cent basis," stalled Mr. Mortimer. "Or, if five dollars a day is too little, what would you say?"

"Wouldn't say," Tommy replied.

"Too bad we can't get together," Mortimer muttered, rising. "Thought we might make a dicker."

"Draw straws," Edith suggested, laughing.

"All right, Mr. Mortimer," exclaimed Tommy. "I'll toss a coin with you, for my proposition against yours, at seven-fifty a day."

"I'll flip the coin," said Edith. She switched on the light.

"Throwing money around is the best thing you do, young lady," grinned the old man, with a wry face. "But here's a half-dollar. I'll just take you up on your gamble, young man. Heads!"

"Tails, I win!" laughed Tommy, in sudden relief from the tension.

"Here we go," Edith exclaimed, flipping the half-dollar. It fell on the grass-mat rug, and rolled. All three of them leaned after it to see how it lay.

"Tails! I win!" shouted Tommy, jubilantly. "And listen, Mr. Mortimer, I'm telling you, *we* win! A colt as good as Charley Dillon *can't* lose!"

"Well, I hope you're right," said the older man. "See you in the morning, at the track—at ten o'clock," he added, turning to enter the house.

CHARLEY DILLON was a fairly rangy but rather slender sorrel colt. Even an experienced horseman, looking at him, might have mistaken him for a thoroughbred. And indeed, his color, his running conformation and his nervous, impish disposition may all have been traceable to some thoroughbred strain. Rumor held that there was hot blood in the Dillon veins, and the rumor was strengthened by the fact that many of the Dillon colts seemed to prefer running to trotting or pacing.

Tommy knew that Charley Dillon carried speed. His problem was to "get hold" of the colt, and, in possession of confidence, restrain that speed within the breaking point. So he ignored the older horsemen, with their gibes, and well-meant advice, and went to work in his own way.

"Tails, I win," he muttered, his first day. He leaned against the half-door of Charley Dillon's new stall, watching the colt nose his oats. The sorrel kept a wary eye on him, and nervously switched his tail from side to side.

"If you were a tiger, Charley," said Tommy, aloud, "I'd say you were mad, about to leap on some prey. But if you were a puppy, I'd think you were wagging that tail as a friendly sign. What is your tail language?"

The colt cocked his ears as Tommy spoke, but went on switching his tail. During the first week he listened to Tommy's voice a great deal. He learned the boy's voice, and learned, too, to know that it was the same tow-headed boy that fed him, watered him, brushed him, and slept near by at nights. The next week, he learned that the same boy would harness and hitch him, jog him miles to a low sulky, unhitch and unharness him again, and rub him down. Close contact taught him that Tommy Dawson was his friend.

On a Sunday, Tommy went into the Mortimer house to report progress. If he stayed longer than the report required, it was only because Edith was at home.

"I think I've got hold of him, Mr. Mortimer," said Tommy.

"What makes you think so?" asked the older man, skeptically.

"Well,"—Tommy grinned,—*"he's quit switching his tail. When his tail's nervous.*

it's a sign he's on guard. As if he said: friend or enemy?"

"I've played with horses thirty years, and that's a new one on me," protested Mortimer. "But a sulky horse signals with his tail. Clamps it tight."

"Yes, and some horses, when they quit trying in a race, or are worn out," said Tommy, "will flop their tails up in the air."

"Hope we never see Charley Dillon do *that*," laughed Edith.

"Well, you may see him do a lot of things," Tommy promised. "But you'll never see him quit, or wear out. His eyes tell me that. In another week, Mr. Mortimer, I'll begin setting him down for speed. I'll go at him slowly."

"That's right; bring him along gradual," Mortimer agreed. "But, boy, you want to bring him a long way before you ask to start him in any races."

"Don't worry, we'll show you plenty," declared the lad confidently.

Two weeks more taught Tommy two more things about his colt. Charley Dillon trusted him and would trot confidently, for him, to the old low-hung training-sulky. And Charley Dillon, in his stall, was sensitive about his tail. Tommy had to brush it carefully, even gingerly, to avoid being kicked. Even his friend, the tow-haired boy, could not handle his long, luxuriant red tail roughly, without resentment that promised danger.

On another Sunday, Mortimer came out to the track, bringing Edith, to see Tommy drive a mile. Tommy had promised only an easy mile, to prove he had the sorrel's confidence, and hoped to demonstrate good manners and willingness. Edith was alert and interested, but her uncle held to his distrust. They watched Tommy hitch the colt.

"See?" asked Tommy. "Watch his tail switching. He's asking himself if you folks mean harm or good to him."

"Well, if he's worrying about me, I can mighty soon tell him," Mortimer said. "If he trots, he can go on eating. If he don't—no oats!"

Charley Dillon, alone on the track with Tommy, forgot his anxiety over the strangers, and buckled into his task calmly. Dragging the heavy old exercise cart, he trotted a smooth, easy trip in 2:16 and a fraction, his teeth against the bit all the way. Tommy was jubilant, and Edith was almost as much elated, for she could see the handsome sorrel colt behaved well.

"He doesn't act like a wild horse," she said to Mr. Mortimer.

"Maybe not, now, but wait and see what happens when the boy calls on him for *real* speed," her uncle replied.

IN still another fortnight, after days of steady, careful work, Tommy called at the Mortimer home again and asked Mr. Mortimer to come out for a real test.

"I'm hitching him to a racing bike tomorrow," Tommy explained, "and I'm going to try to do a mile in 2:10 or better. If he'll do it, we'll have him down to fast enough time for the Western Horseman stake at the State Fair."

"I'll come out," replied Mr. Mortimer, "but I'll have my fingers crossed. I'm still looking for that fool colt to run away with you."

"We will get along all right," Tommy laughed, his big chin out.

They went at the first hard trial, Tommy in confidence and Edith in enthusiasm. The old man had his fingers crossed.

He and Edith climbed the steps to the empty judges' stand, so that they might see every step of the mile. Tommy came out with the colt hitched up close to a light race bike. A colored boy from Jolly's stable held Charley's head while Tommy swung a leg over the seat. Clutching the reins, he picked up the colt's tail and laid it over the seat, and then clambered into the seat himself. Tightening his grip on the lines, he clucked to the colt and—the performance began.

Charley Dillon backed, and then he lunged forward. Then he broke into a buck-jumping run the wrong way of the track. Tommy, wondering what was amiss, whipsawed at the colt's mouth and brought him to a stop. He wheeled, and forced the colt into a slow, gingerly jog back to the head of the stretch. Again he wheeled and headed for the start. Going under the wire, Charley Dillon, in response to Tommy's call for speed, broke again, to run in short, plunging leaps past the first turn.

"Rats—I knew it," exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, sourly.

"Wait, wait, Uncle, and you'll see," begged Edith.

But he did not see anything creditable. Charley Dillon finally got down to the trot again, but broke on the backstretch when Tommy urged him to greater speed. And finally, after settling unwillingly to trot

again, he broke once more, this time into a wild head-swinging gallop that took him past the stand. Tommy was in dismay, and Edith almost in tears.

"Shows what a dummy I was," declared Mortimer. "Trusting to a wild colt and a fool kid to come through! Out this expense and time. I'm through."

"But, Uncle, what will you do?" asked Edith. Tommy was clambering down from the bike seat, shaking his head dubiously.

"Sell the colt, or—"

"But you admitted you couldn't get anything for him," protested Edith.

"Take what I can get," growled her uncle. "Come on, we're going home."

"And not see Tommy, or the colt—find out what was wrong?"

"I should worry. I'm through with 'em both," snapped Mortimer. "One's as dumb as the other is crazy. Come on."

DISAPPOINTED and blue, Edith followed him down the steps and to his car. Tommy, discouraged, looked for them while the colored boy walked the colt for him, under blankets, to cool him out slowly. Then he went back to the colt, and, later in the afternoon, worked out Charley Dillon a good mile to the old exercise-sulky. That night he went to Mortimer's house.

"Uncle's gone downtown, Tommy," said Edith. "He's mad, all over."

"I don't blame him," Tommy replied, "after the exhibition we put on! But after you left, we went a good mile to the heavy old sulky, in close to 2:10. He's a trotting fool."

"Uncle says," Edith said lugubriously, "that he's no trotter, and you're the fool. He says if he don't find a buyer he'll give the colt away."

"Wish he'd give him to me," muttered Tommy, disconsolately.

"He wouldn't give you a pleasant look, I'm afraid."

"Well, maybe not," Tommy admitted. "And if he did give me the colt, I'm broke. I couldn't get him to the races."

"Tommy, what in the world was the matter with him?"

"I've been trying to think," said Tommy. "This afternoon, late, I had the vet go over him, examine his teeth, and everything, but he couldn't find anything that would make him act the way he did. He jerked, and backed, and tried to kick. I had no more than climbed into the seat, and tucked his tail under me—"

"Tommy Dawson!" exclaimed Edith suddenly.

"What?"

"After all you've said about his tail—its sensitiveness, and everything!"

"Well, you've got to sit on their tails—keep 'em out of your face! All the big driv-

"Did he—" Tommy began.

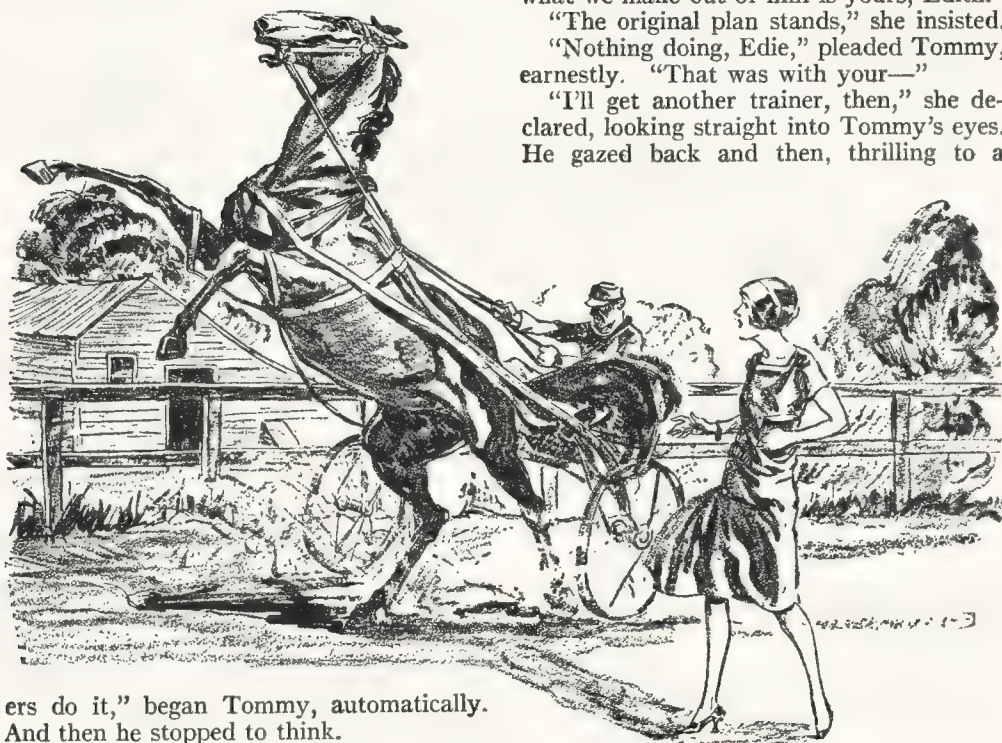
"He certainly did, and he was making good riddance, he thought," said Edith. "Charley Dillon is *my* colt now, subject to the same scheme you had with my uncle."

"Aw, no," Tommy protested. "He's your colt and I'll race him for you. But what we make out of him is yours, Edith."

"The original plan stands," she insisted.

"Nothing doing, Edie," pleaded Tommy, earnestly. "That was with your—"

"I'll get another trainer, then," she declared, looking straight into Tommy's eyes. He gazed back and then, thrilling to a



ers do it," began Tommy, automatically. And then he stopped to think.

"Could *you* run or trot, or walk, without moving your backbone, all along it?" asked Edith, smiling. "A horse's tail is only the end of his backbone."

"Edith," Tommy ventured, after a long pause, "ask him to give the colt to *you*. I'm broke, but I can support the colt. Float Jolly will pay me for working some horses he's leaving when he goes to the races Thursday. I'll make good with the colt, and I'll find somebody to back us."

"I'll do it," agreed Edith, joyfully.

Tommy stayed later than usual that evening, talking optimistically with the happy Edith. But when he left, Mr. Mortimer had not yet returned home.

ON Thursday, Edith went out to the fair-ground alone to tell him the news. She found Tommy at the stall, getting Charley Dillon ready, after some warming-up jogs, to take the track once more.

"News, news, Tommy," she exclaimed.

Charley Dillon backed, then lunged forward. Tommy whipsawed at the colt's mouth and brought him to a stop.

warmth he had never known before, he shifted uneasily, and gave in.

"I'll go through with it," he agreed. "Just watch our smoke. Charley's good, and—"

"Get away from that horse's tail," laughed Edith. When Tommy hitched, using the racing bike again, Edith followed him and the colt to the track gate. Then she clambered up on the fence like any railbird. Charley Dillon trotted, as smooth as a ballroom floor, his whole mile. Edith, awkwardly thumbing her uncle's old stopwatch, noted the time. . . .

Edith wanted to supply the money for final fee payments in the Western Horseman stake, but Tommy would not hear of it. He was unable to raise the money himself, although he earned enough from

Jolly to pay shipping expense and stall rental. When Edith suggested he borrow at the bank, Tommy demurred because he could not imagine a bank financing a race-horse. But she insisted it was worth trying, and Tommy, to his surprise, was able to borrow the money. Edith did not tell him she had already visited the bank, of which her uncle was a director, and arranged for the loan by a deposit of her own.

Tommy shipped Charley Dillon with the two horses of Float Jolly, down to the State Fair track a week ahead of time, and traveled in the horse-car. When Edith, dragging her reluctant and protesting uncle along, came down for the great ten-thousand-dollar colt race, Tommy had already accustomed the colt to the track, the strange surroundings and the crowds.

"He's cool as a cucumber," said Tommy, greeting Edith and Mortimer, when they found him with the colt in an old barn far away from the track.

"Boy, you want him hot, if you're figuring to get anywhere," growled the old man.

"Uncle Wet-blanket," pouted Edith.

"Tails, I win," Tommy chuckled.

An hour later he took the track. Edith, sitting in the stands, clapped her hands, and a few women, admiring the picture the pretty sorrel made, did likewise. But in the main, the presence of Charley Dillon, s. c., by Sidney Dillon, driven by Dawson, made no impression whatever on the crowd. Charley Dillon, it seemed, was just one of five other colts entered in an effort to make the big stake a struggle for two grand circuit stars driven by Cox and Murphy. Tommy crowded back his nervousness and got out to the track early, in order to give the colt plenty of opportunity, through warm-up sprints down the stretch, to forget the people and the noise. All the while he talked reassuringly to Charley.

Casual onlookers who noticed the boy and his pretty sorrel colt, thought something seemed queer about their appearance. The horsemen grinned as they saw Charley Dillon's tail floating loose. And some boys on the fence took up a jeering shout:

"Git him a fly net, rube!"

SCORING in third position from the rail, Tommy heard the word, "*Go!*" greet their fourth effort to start. Charley Dillon was on his good behavior, and went off on the trot. Murphy's filly, at the pole, and Cox's colt, from the outside, shot quickly to the front, and trotted around the first

turn like a team. Tommy watched his chance, and when the colt next inside him broke, he pulled over to the rail, and sat in behind the front pair. Thus they headed down the back stretch.

"Hey, kid, if that colt switches his tail, he'll knock you offa that bike," greeted a strange horseman, pulling up alongside.

Other drivers, noticing Tommy driving the red colt with the long free tail, wondered at the innovation. All of them, apparently, set it down to the boy's greenness. Tommy paid no attention to this one driver's chaff. He kept his eyes focused on Charley Dillon's ears and saw, past them, the quiet shoulders of Cox and Murphy. The two big line stars seemed to be sitting tight, and waiting for the home-stretch, to sprint for a verdict. The gait seemed slow.

Charley Dillon, his ears moving back and forth as if listening both for word from his tow-headed friend and an opportunity to get through in front, trotted steadily enough. At the far turn, he became impatient. Tommy felt the red tail jerk and twitch over his right shoulder, and tightened his grip on the reins.

Swinging for home, he again noticed the twitching and felt a stronger pull on the lines. Charley Dillon burned to go—and he got his chance. For Murphy, on the rail disdaining the possibility that anything behind could come up to him, swung out just a trifle to carry Cox and his colt wide. Cox expected the trick, as Murphy knew he would, and called for speed at the same instant. His colt moved ahead but Murphy knew that move, too, and his filly kept step.

It happened more quickly than the story can be told. Charley Dillon, fighting for his head, jerked his tail angrily, and Tommy easily, gradually, lightened his grip.

"Ho, boy, let's go," he called, soothingly, and the red colt flashed briskly into the gap Murphy had left at the pole. And then, as Murphy first, and then Cox, saw him coming, he urged his colt and started a fighting sprint for the wire before the other two were ready. Both, startled, began driving. For an instant the three rushed head and head. Then came the break.

Charley Dillon, making his speed gradually, pulled to the fore. But the other colt and the filly, hurried by their star drivers, were upset, and broke, one after the other. The driver who had kidded Tommy about his colt's red tail was hope-

lessly cut off behind the two stars, and Tommy Dawson and Charley Dillon coasted home in the first heat, winners by two easy lengths. The crowd, stunned, gave them only a faint cheer, wondering what had happened to the titans from the grand circuit.

"See, Uncle, see, see?" screamed Edith, in her excitement.

"I'll see the next heat, too," muttered Mortimer. "He'll run away, next time."

Tommy, full of elation, crowded back his feelings. He knew the time was slow, and that he had won by catching the two big-timers napping. Next heat, he felt sure, would be the crucial test. If Charley Dillon could ease behind a slow pace, and come out fast to win, maybe he could trot the full mile at a better rate, and— When he went out for the second heat, Tommy had his program made.

"I'll take the pole, kid, at the first turn," said Murphy, as they were jockeying for the start.

"You're welcome to it," Tommy chaffed. But this start was false. Coming back, he found himself beside Cox.

"Keep that colt's long tail out of *my* face," warned Cox.

"Why don't you hitch your horse right?" Murphy asked.

TOMMY paid no attention, but wheeled for another start. Murphy was at his right, and Cox next outside. They went away flying, and Murphy at once tried to make good his threat to take the pole. Cox footed it with him, both hoping to carry the kid's red colt to a break, and then swing in against the rail. But Tommy sent Charley Dillon along boiling. The colt reveled in speed, and when they rounded the turn, Cox and Murphy were still outside, head and head of course, but traveling longer routes.

They hung there, expecting, if not a break by the sorrel, at least an easing up of the speed by his boy driver. Tommy carried them wide all the way into the back stretch and then, instead of slowing down, let Charley Dillon have a little freedom. He moved ahead slightly, trotting true as a die.

Murphy shouted something at Tommy, but the boy, bothered slightly by that thick floating red tail beside his right ear, could not be sure what it was. Something about a runaway. Instead of replying, he spoke to his colt.

"Let's go, boy," he called, firmly. "Give the crowd a *mile* race, not a loafing match, and a stretch sprint."

It was well he let the colt have his head, for Cox, outside, had decided to try for the lead and the pole before reaching the far turn. He did not relish being carried wide a third time. Murphy held his filly in between, watching his chance, while Tommy rode carefully to the fore. He feared to take in behind Tommy, still thinking the sorrel would break and thus cut him off from his chance against Cox. When they neared the far turn, and Charley Dillon still held to his smooth, free stride and Cox had not been able to take the lead or swing over, Murphy urged his filly up into the gap again, and they whirled all the long way around the third and fourth turns, still head and head.

"Tryin' to kill that colt?" yelled Murphy, angrily.

"Nope; yours, and that other one," Tommy retorted. His heart exulted, for he knew, now, that Charley Dillon would trot all day. "Let's go, hey, Charley?" he called to the red ears cocking back and forth in front of him.

But instead of making speed, he held the reins tightly. Let the other fellows sprint! Past the eighth pole, Murphy and Cox, flipping their whips, started a furious sprint.

Charley Dillon's tail twitched and jerked, his head set harder than ever against the bit, and then, only then, Tommy began driving in earnest. He called to the colt, gave him his head, and, braced for the rush of speed, felt himself fairly flying. This Dillon run? His trot's a run! And the grandstand, rail-birds and old horsemen along the track thrilled to the battle with a storm of applause.

At the sixteenth, Charley Dillon's red ears were in front again. A few strides, and he was clearly in the lead. At the wire, trotting faster than ever, he flaunted his great red tail in the faces of the grand circuit pair, and Tommy Dawson, a load off his heart, turned to grin silently at Murphy and Cox.

"Time of the mile," boomed the judge through his megaphone, "2:04, a new record for the event. Charley Dillon wins the heat and the race—"

CAME then a great popular reception for the green-looking boy with his wrongly hitched colt. The crowds stood up and shouted for the home state pair that had

Tails, We Win

beaten the grand circuit stars in straight heats. Ceremonies attendant upon the winning of a big stake. Photograph of the winning colt, his head held by the owner, pretty Edith Mortimer, flushed proudly and laughing, a grinning boy standing beside her. Floral horseshoe for the colt!

An hour later, Charles W. Mortimer unwillingly followed Edith to the barn in search of Tommy and the colt. Two men were talking with Tommy. Edith looked for Charley Dillon, but Mortimer walked up to the three.

"Say, boy, mebbe we can find a buyer—" he began.

"Mr. Murphy," said Tommy, ignoring the older man, "unless you can meet his offer right now, Charley Dillon is sold to Mr. Cox, for seven thousand dollars. I'd like to hold the matter open for you, but I've got to get back to school Saturday." He looked at Murphy, who slowly shook his head. "Then, Mr. Cox, he's your colt. And for the love of Mike, *don't* sit on his tail, if you want him to trot."

"Everybody sits on his horse's tail," said the great reinsman. "Why do you hitch him wrong?"

"A horse can't do his best with a hundred and fifty pounds loaded on the tip end of his backbone," Tommy laughed.

"By jing, that's sense, now. We live and learn," Murphy commented. "Well, I'll bring you the money by the time he's cooled out," said Cox. "Thanks," he added, turning to hurry away. Murphy followed, still shaking his head.

"Wish I'd had the money, or my man with me," he muttered. "A grand colt! And this green kid has taught us how to hitch."

"Listen, boy," began Mr. Mortimer. But he was too stupefied to finish. His half of seven thousand, his half of the six thousand dollars race-winner's share, all shot! This dumb kid—

"Tommy, have you—" Edith began, coming up from the stable door.

"Tails, I win," gloated Tommy, with a happy grin. "The race, six thousand dollars; the sale, seven, Edie!"

"Tails, *we* win," laughed Edith, happily, ignoring his talk of dollars.

"*We?*" echoed Tommy. "Of course, *we*. A regular partnership, Edie, and—"

But old man Mortimer did not hear the rest of it. And, in fairness to him, it must be said that he had the decency not to look around to see what happened next.

The Shacker

By

HAROLD TITUS

Illustrated by Ralph Frederick

*The distinguished author of
"Timber," "The Tough Nut"
and many other fine novels is at
his best in this vivid drama of
the North Michigan woods.*

EVER since Mamie McIntyre, at eighteen, bloomed into a young woman who was irresistible to the youth of the town, people had been accustomed to seeing first one, then another, of the young men of fit age succumb to her charms, pay ardent court and then either be cast aside as of no further interest or else give up in chagrin and bewilderment—and, mostly, stewing in envy for those who were then going the way they had gone.

First one, then another, yes; but this must not be taken to mean that her suitors wooed singly, for at intervals as many as half a dozen were falling over one another for the privilege of escorting Mamie to a dance or movie or picnic or skiing party or just to sit with her in her father's house and be made to suffer! She was the most popular girl the little town had ever known; people of wide experience said that she was the most sought-after girl they had ever heard of, and no one doubted even so broad a statement.

Perhaps coquetry was not born in her because, fundamentally, Mamie was as sound as a good apple. It may have been that she developed this particular tantalizing quality as a protective device against assault by numbers, because surely it was not present in the beginning; or, again, it may have been that so much attention went to her head and tempted her to try her powers of attraction on young men she could not take seriously just for the sake of conquest. Whatever the reason or motive, she was an elusive and adroit charmer.



*Heading northward
for the river went
the boat. "That's
getting some place!"
Burton muttered
bitterly.*

She gave the lads a deal to think about and the older people a deal to talk about; but none of the young chaps, it is safe to say, thought of her as did Ray Burton, and from none of her adventures rose so much gossip as when she ensnared the heart of the silent, aloof shacker from out north.

NOW, shacker is a term of the Michigan woods. It is applied to a man who lives in a shack, a structure of his own handiwork or an abandoned and appropriated shelter erected by others. The true shacker toils no more than is necessary to meet his own notion of what is required for the continued union of soul and body. He may trap, he may cut pulpwood, and now and again he may work in a logging-camp, but as a rule he will stay close by his place of abode until, for some good reason, he moves on to another roof and its complement of walls. They are of all degrees, of course: scrupulously neat or unspeakably filthy, hospitable or hostile, intelligent or deficient mentally, honest or crooked, and of all the gradations possible between these enumerated extremes—but the shacker has yet to live who is considered a social asset by the respectable of the community.

Ray Burton was a shacker; had been since he came into the country and that was before his beard had stiffened. He was young, he was big, he was alert and,

after a rugged fashion, handsome. Looking at him, a stranger would have said that here was a man with possibilities; listening to him talk on those rare occasions when he volunteered anything, the same stranger would have guessed that he was an individual of consequence and destined to make his mark.

But the town—in the way towns have—knew him as a ne'er-do-well, a renegade trapper too smart for the wardens, a lazy woods bum who preferred to suffer such a reputation to taking up honest work and making a name for himself. A few, to be sure, retained a curiosity about Burton, and felt that perhaps this general opinion was not wholly warranted and that he was not like other shackers; but they never argued the point and if any tried to penetrate beneath his reserve, they failed.

For half a dozen years he had lived on a piece of high land overlooking the Blind Sucker, appropriating a log structure abandoned by deer hunters, making it snug and warm, even making it attractive by a raked dooryard and a few hardy flowers. He was far from his nearest neighbors, the crew of a coastguard station on Lake Superior. He was twenty-five miles from town in an air line.

In the fall he trapped for muskrat and mink. In winter he pursued fox and wolf. Just before the break-up he would appear in town, walking on snowshoes, dragging a toboggan laden with fur. A "horse for work," he was—when he worked.

Except for his burden none would have thought he had been shacking it since November. He was always shaved; long prac-

tice let him give himself a passable haircut; his clothing was invariably mended. Neat, he was; but then, many a shacker has fastidious tastes.

He would stay in town until the sun had whipped the drifts; then he would return to his shack and stay until summer.

If the summer brought many rains he might not be seen again except on rare trips in for supplies. But if it came dry and the forest fire-wardens had a great deal to do, Burton would come to town, get a room and sit in Sweeney's garage, waiting for fire-calls. He was a good man to have handy. He was a fire-hater from the heart out. No smoke was too thick, no stint of work too long for him, and he would stick in front of a fire until his shirt curled.

But he made no friends, had no intimates. The fire-wardens appreciated him in a way, of course, but the men in the game division of the Conservation Department classed him as an outlaw although they had never proved a violation on him, and so the kindly feeling toward him began and ended with his services on fires. He never mingled with the townspeople except in the garage. Now and again he would appear at gatherings, but always alone and on the outskirts.

So it certainly was the beginning of a surprise when he stepped out of Sweeney's door and took after Mamie McIntyre!

NO one could know that that move was the culmination of many episodes and dreams. It had begun four summers earlier when Mamie encountered Burton in the drug-store. Perhaps she had seen him before; perhaps not. But even if she had observed him frequently in the past she was viewing the world through different eyes that summer, having just become conscious of her powers, and this day she looked upon a tall fellow in greased pacs, in freshly washed khaki pants staggered short, held to trim hips by a broad belt, in a shirt opened at his bronzed throat; with a wind-burned face and wide gray eyes and with light hair which lay along his temples in waves. She looked. Her brown eyes met those gray ones and then her gaze fell demurely. . . . Demurely, but her sweet mouth stirred provocatively in just the suggestion of a smile.

Only that. But in November she saw him again, in a scarlet Mackinaw and Scotch cap and again her eyes dropped and her mouth stirred, with something more

than the suggestion of a smile. During the break-up she saw him watching from the doorway a crowded dance floor. This time she actually did smile over her partner's shoulder and then looked so adroitly into her partner's face that it was difficult, indeed, to tell whether she smiled at the onlooker or at the youth who danced with her. . . . Again and again and again until her smile for Burton became, after a manner, frank and she inclined her head slightly when those gray eyes met hers.

Into the fourth year this went on and then, one hot July day, while Burton sat in the garage ready to help if distant look-outs on their steel towers spotted smoke, Mamie passed close outside the window through which he gazed. She was in white and her firm arms were bare, her small feet shod in white pumps and her slim legs in white silk. She looked into his eyes and this time she unmistakably bowed.

She passed on and a great breath slipped from the man. He rose, wetting his lips. He crossed the street and followed swiftly and by the time she reached her father's house beneath its maples he was within speaking distance. She turned, seeing him coming so intently, and he lifted his hand in an arresting gesture.

"Do you know me?" he asked, halting.

She said: "Why, yes! You're Mr. Burton." —In a sort of challenge as if to add by inference: "What of it?"

"That's right—Burton. And I've been waiting to talk to you."

She showed puzzlement. "Waiting? Why, I—"

"Not here. Just waiting, several years."

His gray eyes had fallen most serious as he regarded the tender oval of her face.

She stammered and laughed, confused by his words and his look, though she was not often confused by young men.

"Yeah; several years." He smiled himself. "I've been sort of watchin' you."

That nettled her; either his frankness or word of what he had done or her own embarrassment. She was not at ease before his manner.

"I don't know whether to think you're just bold or what!" she exclaimed.

"Maybe I am bold but I wouldn't want to be if you don't like it. Generally I don't care much what folks think, but you're something very different. I've been waiting to talk to you and if just comin' and telling about it instead of hedging around and sort of stalking you don't do, I'm

sorry. But that's kind of my way to do things."

"Come up and sit down," said Mamie.

THAT was how it began. He went up on the veranda and sat down. The next afternoon he repeated the call. The following evening he took Mamie to a movie and by the end of that week he had made up for a great deal of lost time and the town thought it a good joke—Mamie McIntyre taking in the shacker!

A strange suitor, this, different from the host in Mamie's train. No palaver, no subtlety about him. He came for a purpose and talked to a purpose without subterfuge or oblique approach.

Attention pleased the coquette in the girl; besides, he was odd—he interested the broader human qualities in her. She led him on to talk of himself, goading him when necessary, teasing him to reveal further oddities.

"What is it they say about you, that you're a renegade, a fur-poacher?" she asked once, when gentler devices had failed to persuade him to talk of his reputation.

He smiled his slow smile, gentle and sweet for so big a man.

"Yeah. They say that. It's because I shack it, far's they know. A man who shacks is always supposed to be a violator.

"To understand that maybe I got to tell you a little about how I look at things. I like the bush; it's the only place I'm happy. I've got to live in the timber and make my living there. Just that: my living; without hurting anything that's there for me to use; without gutting a country, is what I mean.

"I trap. But I trap so's I'm never taking even the natural increase in any one place. Lots of times when the law would let me, I leave a marsh alone because it needs to be let alone. Wherever I do take fur, I only take a few. Some seasons when the law says nobody can trap anywhere, I keep on. I do it because I know I won't hurt the stuff, that I never take too much and that I only trap where the fur will stand up under it."

He gave his head a slow shake.

"I'm outside the law now and again, sure; but it evens up. The law, you see, will let men ravish a country. I can't do that, even if it's legal. I break the laws men make but I never break the law of the woods."

There was a moment of silence.

"Beaver?" she asked significantly, because she was wise in the ways of her country.

"Never! I never touched a beaver! I know they think I do. Most trappers do when they get the chance because it's so valuable. I know who they are because, bein' thought an outlaw myself by the warden, these men think so too and spill their secrets. But beaver, you see, took an awful larrupin' from the white man ever since he come into this country. They were most done for when the law stepped in. They're comin' back fast, and could stand trappin' here and there but—" He shrugged. "Seems to me that man owes an awful lot to beaver!"

HE was so obviously honest in all this that the girl was touched. The mischief left her eyes and they were sober, gentle, with a light shining through which was the sound heart of the girl itself.

"But, loving the woods as you do, isn't there some other way you could make your living?"

Again he shook his head with that emphatic slowness.

"I've had chances, sure. Man down below offered me the job as head guide at his resort. Likely, I'd be a good one. Was I inclined, I probably could make good with a resort of my own. But these tourists. . . . Why, so few of 'em know what it's all about! Look what they do to trout water they learn to get to; look what they do to deer and partridge! They string fire with 'em and tin cans and— Well, they just don't belong. Killers, most of 'em; I couldn't help folks like that to get around." He paused and smiled as if at himself. "And maybe it's just because I'm selfish, you see; I like to be alone in this country.

"Once the Columbus Bluffs folks wanted me to cruise timber, but I couldn't help an outfit do to a country what any timber operator does.

"Dutton, the district warden, offered me a job as State trapper. Of course, I take wolves and fox on my own hook, but if I went with him it'd be my job to exterminate 'em if I could and I'd hate to think that I'd never hear a wolf give his hunting-cry again. . . . They've as much right to what's in the woods as I have, I reckon.

"Feller—a tourist—in my country last summer stopped and visited. He come back and wanted me to go fur-farmin' with him. I got a picture of myself raisin' 'rats and

beaver in a fence just to kill 'em! When it's my wits against theirs, all right. But any other way. . . . Not me!"

He examined one palm critically.

"No, me, I've got to go along this way, I guess. I hope you understand how I am, now. It's what I wanted to tell you." He looked up gravely. "I wanted you to know all about me because I'd like to get you to marry me."

THAT overwhelmed her. She flushed furiously. She was without words. Her gentle mood was dissipated, her profound interest in him was driven away; his flat statement revived her impulse to toy with men and edged it with cruelty because, caught off guard, he had confused her, and being made a victim as she had victimized so many, touched her pride.

She laughed, trying to gather herself and dance away from him gracefully as she had danced from so many others.

"I mean it," he said huskily, and his hands trembled. "I love you so, Mamie! I've been lovin' you for years. Why, I've watched you grow up, you might say. I've followed you on the street, here; I've seen you at dances and things. And I've gone back to my shack and remembered how you looked, how your laugh sounded, the fragrance of your hair—one night, comin' out of a picture show.

"I've dreamed about you nights, with the blizzard yellin' outside. I've seen your face in the smoke of my fire; I've heard your voice in the little streams, away back where nobody else ever gets!"

His voice was unsteady, now, and he leaned forward, pale beneath his bronze and his forehead beaded with moisture.

"I've loved you so, out there by myself! I've planned how I could take care of you and make you comfortable and happy and contented, seein' things as I do. I've sat dark nights when I hadn't seen a soul for months, and talked it all over with you, Mamie. You seemed to understand. . . . I love you so!"

He loved her so! And in making his love so eloquently—for his gestures, his tone, his inflections were refined eloquence—he touched her. He touched her deeply and she did not want to be touched by any man, yet. It angered her, and she laughed.

"You'd take me out to your shack?"

"Yes. It's snug; it's warm; it's the loveliest—"

"You'd make a *shacker* of me?"

"I thought you might get to know things and—"

"To live my life in a shack?" She laughed again, harshly, this time. "You *are* simple, aren't you?"

He rose, pain in his eyes.

"I expect maybe I am . . . some."

"It's a good thing you realize it, then! Why— You don't understand girls; that's very plain. You don't know that a girl doesn't marry a man she can't respect. A girl wants a husband who will get ahead; she wants a home, the right kind of a home; she wants the promise of better things, of success for her husband, of accomplishments by him that she can be proud of! A girl wants to hold up her head when she thinks of her husband. A girl wants no *shacker*!"

She flung out the word venomously.

He lowered his head and his hands shook. That steadied her, satiated some of the urge to hurt him in return for his giving her a moment of confusion. She stood breathing fast, a dominating little figure.

"I guess you're right, probably," he said.

"I—I see how it is, now. I'd ought to've realized it before. I'm not what you'd call the gettin'-ahead kind, likely. I—I'd only hoped—" He put on his hat and hitched absently at his belt. "Well, I'll be gettin' along."

He went down the steps. The girl stood there and her lips trembled, because again that gentleness was clamoring for the upper hand. She *was* gentle at heart and she had hurt him sorely. He stopped at the bottom and looked up with an odd smile.

"So long, Mamie. I'll be hopin' you get ahead as you want . . . And that's straight!"

He walked away, then, and out of her life; and in a half-hour he was walking out of town, toward his shack on the Blind Sucker.

ONE more triumph for Mamie, that was; but it was nearly her last. Thad Elder broke down her guard shortly and she surrendered without reservation, as many a coquette has done. Thad had pursued her for months, refusing to be shaken off. A fine, upstanding young chap, he was, and that was his way: to go after a prize and win it. He had worked as tower man, as special fire-warden and, that fall, was put on as regular county warden and the chief

himself, in town on an inspection trip, said that he expected great things of Thad; that the Department needed young men and that if the lad kept up his record promotion would be both rapid and certain.

Perhaps word of this influenced the girl. Anyhow, she married Thad a few months later and went to live in a modest house, plunging into debt for the furniture that would make it the abode of young people well on their way toward getting ahead.

would be safe, the loss of money, added to the doctor-bill, was a serious matter; and Mamie lost both flesh and color.

It might have been noticed—but was not—that Burton, during his stay in town through the break-up, listened attentively to what casual gossip had to reveal of the Elders. Thad was out now, but not the same man. His debts worried him, men said, and he had lost a chance at promotion while laid up.



"We know what made you so willin' to help, Elder—you're so damn' afraid you wouldn't get your cut, that you wouldn't trust us!"

The new warden was as busy and as energetic and as firm as could be and Mamie rode with him now and again, flushed with pride for the way he stood in the eyes of the community. And when the chief came through again she spread a grand dinner for him in the new home and was prouder than ever when he said: "Keep going, youngster! There are fine jobs up above for lads who can hold your pace!"

And then, just before the deer season, Elder's pace slowed. He and Mamie went to a dance. Leaving early—for he must patrol on the morrow—Thad slipped on the steps; and they picked him up with a broken thigh-bone.

For weeks he lay in bed. Tough, that; his pay stopped, and although his job

"And his wife rides him," one volunteered.

"Aw, she don't ride him, exactly," another protested. "She's just worried. Debts and things hang heavy on her. She's the getting-ahead kind. They've had a bad bump, but they're young."

Yes, young, but even so, with the crisis past Mamie did not pick up. She grew thinner. Her walk lost some of its spring and one day the doctor ordered her to bed. More expenses for the young couple,—a woman to care for the house, and—another doctor-bill!

IT was Thad, then, who showed strain.

He did not go about his work with assurance and evidence of an easy mind. The

town was avowedly sorry for the Elders, now. People spoke of them in lowered voices. It was too bad to see a girl going to pieces the way Mamie was going. Oh, she had flown high for a time, to be sure, and had been a little rough on some of the boys. But she was younger, then; any girl would have done as she had done. She had settled down completely, as a wife should, and this run of luck was what she drew for it! She had ambition, that girl, and because Thad was so eager to make progress he was actually slowing down. He had muffed some important cases by being over-anxious; his record was not as good as it had been. Merchants were getting a little impatient with his bills, rumor had it, and the chief warden no longer went out of his way to praise the boy.

Winter passed; March came, and with it Ray Burton, dragging his toboggan over the crust to town.

Elder met him on the main street.

"I'm going to look over your fur," he said.

"Good. I could hold out for a search-warrant, I expect. But—good, anyhow."

The warden went through the packs in the fur-buyer's warehouse while others looked on; he finished without a word of comment except a gruff, "All right."

Plug Anson, in the group, had watched with an unpleasant twinkle in his hard eye. A known, and repeatedly convicted, trapper of illegal fur, this man; loud-mouthed, dirty, reckless.

"Out-smarted him, eh?" he chuckled after Burton had dealt for his winter's work. He asked it slyly, with a knowing wink.

"I took nothing the law wont allow."

"Sure not! *Course* not!" The man laughed uncouthly and nudged. "You're smart, Burton; I'll hand it to you! No sir, it don't pay to try to run no beaver through any towns *this* winter. Damn' Department's gone crazy on beaver. Hadn't you heard? Hell, they're makin' a drive to protect 'em 'nd it's about all this kid's done in this county: beaver patrol. Conviction on a beaver charge means more to a warden than anything else, nowadays. He's kept us scared out, all right, all right, but we aint done yet!"

Burton went out, but Plug followed.

"You wouldn't be above makin' a nice thing—did you know it was safe, would you, Ray?" he insisted.

"What's this nice thing?"

"It's this way: I got an awful mess of beaver spotted. More'n I've seen in one place ever. This young Elder's about ready to crack, too; no man can stand up under too much temptation."

"I don't aim to play dirty pool with beaver, Plug. I know where there's a mess of 'em, too; mebby we're thinking about the same place—but I aint a candidate."

He abruptly left Anson and went about his own affairs.

So Plug Anson was plotting a raid, was he? And ready to bribe Thad Elder. Burton doubted if that could be done. Still—

TO town came Matt Bellew, sometimes crony of Anson's, oftentimes defendant in action brought by the State against traffickers in illegally possessed pelts. The two hung close together. Once they approached Ray and unsuccessfully attempted to engage him in talk of rich rewards to be won by raiding populous beaver colonies.

"I know the place you've got in mind," he told them. "I'd bet a pack of fur against a last year's trapper's license I do. And I tell you again, I'm not interested!"

He watched the pair of outlaws. He saw them joking with Elder in a poolroom as though they were the best of friends. Still, the warden refused an offered cigar—but yet he stood and visited with that brace of poachers. A warden should not do that.

Late that evening Ray came on them again, standing before a building, talking close. They heard him approach (they could not identify him because a suspended sign before the store kept him in shadow) but the warden walked quickly away.

Burton lay a long time that night, piecing things together. In a day or two he saw Thad nod curtly to Anson and Bellew, cutting them, as a man in his position should. But it did not hurt either of the others. They seemed pleased. They were as men in possession of a comfortable secret.

It was raiding time, now—the nadir of the beaver's annual cycle, when food stored beneath ice had lost its freshness; when the unsuspecting animals would be easy prey to traps.

Elder seemed worried, but it was a new sort of worry, Burton felt. He stayed in town when he should have been out. He was jumpy, overly affable to old friends, trying to force an appearance of well-being. Ray trailed him about town for a day; saw him meet with Anson and Bellew at dusk.



"Now, will you stand still?" Burton swung the muzzle to cover the crouching Anson.

The poachers were up to something. They were no longer simply loafers, his intuition told him. He was up all night, loitering in doorways. It was cold and what had been rivulets in the street at dusk were ribbons of ice.

Two hours before dawn he heard them coming down the stairs of the rooming-place they had patronized. They appeared, swaying beneath heavy packs. Snowshoes were under their arms and a rifle in its scabbard was slung beside the burden that Anson carried.

Bellew swore low, his words clear in the frosty air:

"And if you'd had your way with them extra traps—"

He was complaining of the pounds he carried. Traps!

Cautiously Ray followed out along the road that went north from town, halting only when another joined the two figures before him. The two went on after a few moments; the one returned toward town, running now and again. Burton sank close to the ground as he passed. He lay there a long time, so Thad Elder might not see him, should he look back. . . .

He lay in bed until noon that day fully dressed, staring at the ceiling, pondering on the strength of temptation, on what women

want, on respectability and accomplishments.

Five days, a week; nine days passed. Elder talked in the garage of work that would take him westward. Now why should a warden ever disclose where he was going, Burton asked himself. He sat a long time after he had answered that question, pondering on what might be done, if anything. It was sight of Mamie in a rusty coat, holding her head high but walking listlessly, which decided him.

IT was a long drag. The swamps, of course, were impassable. Ray went the roundabout way, following the road first, wallowing through heavy snow in the cuts, to his shins in crusted mud and water elsewhere. He left the road finally and struck east and northward, following the dry ridges.

He had started at dusk. He halted at sunrise, fried bacon, made tea, spread his slicker and, rolled in a single blanket, slept in the sun for two hours.

He went through stands of jack-pine, now, scanning the horizon ahead for signs of smoke. No smoke showed, but within an hour he struck a trail leading into the swamp. It bore man-sign—several days old, but assuring him men had passed that way.

He knew the trappers' cabin that stood on the hog-back which was beyond the swales. He crossed on a beaver dam and found new work, the repair of a man-made break in the structure. A freshly cut stake was driven into the bottom and peering down into the brown water he saw a stone with wire about it. The dam had been broken, a weighted trap set there and the imprisoned beaver drowned. He nodded grimly and pressed on.

Ice still lay in the next, a larger pond. It was rotten but on its melting surface, near holes that had been chopped through, lay freshly cut poles. He whistled softly in amazement at the number of baited traps which had been set there.

Everywhere along that system of waterways was beaver sign. He looked at half a dozen colonies and in each was evidence of recent trapping.

In sight of the cabin he stopped and listened. No sound but the burble of the flooded stream; no smoke from the chimney. The door stood open. After a time he advanced and looked within.

Balsam beds, boughs cut within the fortnight, were on the floor. One man had slept on each many nights; on one, two men had slept a shorter period. The ashes in the stove were still warm.

Outside again, he inspected the tracks in the trail. Three men had been there, two big, one smaller. They had come and gone while the earth was crusted by last night's freeze. They had gone away from the cabin heavily laden, returned light; gone bearing burdens again. . . .

He took the trail at a trot. It led along the timbered ridge which stretched south and eastward, alder bottoms on one side, open muskeg on the other. He was breathing rapidly before the ridge flattened and the timber abruptly gave up to the marsh.

Beneath a clump of spruces he stopped. The prints of shoe-pacs stopped there too, and in their stead showed traces of snowshoes. He lifted his eyes to the timber beyond Betsie Lake, a mile and more away across the flat.

[T was clear to him, then. They had brought their fur here last night. They had much fur, because its weight had driven their feet through the frozen earth in the trail. They had worn snowshoes to hold them up as they crossed that treacherous muskeg, unsafe for heavy travel even in the cold without the aid of rackets. A tedious,

wallowing task, at that, it would have been. Hours would have been required, and the ashes were still hot in the cabin stove.

HE shinned a Norway pine, clung and turned his face toward the lake. The sunlight came to him in jets of twinkling light points. Betsie, shallow and quick to warm, was open—wide open. A long "Ah-h-h" slipped from him as he saw a boat on its surface far toward the other side.

He cached his pack in the cabin on his way back,—taking only a chunk of bacon in his pocket,—then cut around the northern edge of the marsh and struck eastward rapidly.

What had been planned was clear to him. The scheme had been laid months ago, evidenced by that boat cached on Betsie. They would transport their fur down the outlet to Sheephead Lake and thence into Betsie River. What then, he did not know, but the chances were they would meet some outlaw buyer in those remote sections near the coast of Lake Superior where a boat could touch unmolested when the ice moved, exchange their fur for money and scatter. It was the safe way out. No one lived in that country.

He went at a run through an open stand of pine, detouring swales, and in mid-afternoon stood on a poplar ridge and looked down on Sheephead with its floes of ice near the center and open water along the shore. Heading northward for the river went the boat.

One man rowed, another paddled in the stern; a third sat in the bow among the piles of duffle. Burton scratched his chin, an odd light in his eyes.

"That's getting some place," he muttered bitterly.

He heard them in the river later, cursing as they worked their boat over a driftwood jam. They argued, still later, but they were so far away that their words were indistinguishable. He paralleled the winding course of the stream through big hardwood, stopping now and then when sounds were infrequent or faint.

The sun was dropping when he heard the ax. It chopped, first, then it split; and he relaxed. Just at twilight he saw a thin ribbon of smoke rising. They had stopped at a deer-camp for the night, wearied by their wrestle with the flooded, drift-impeded current.

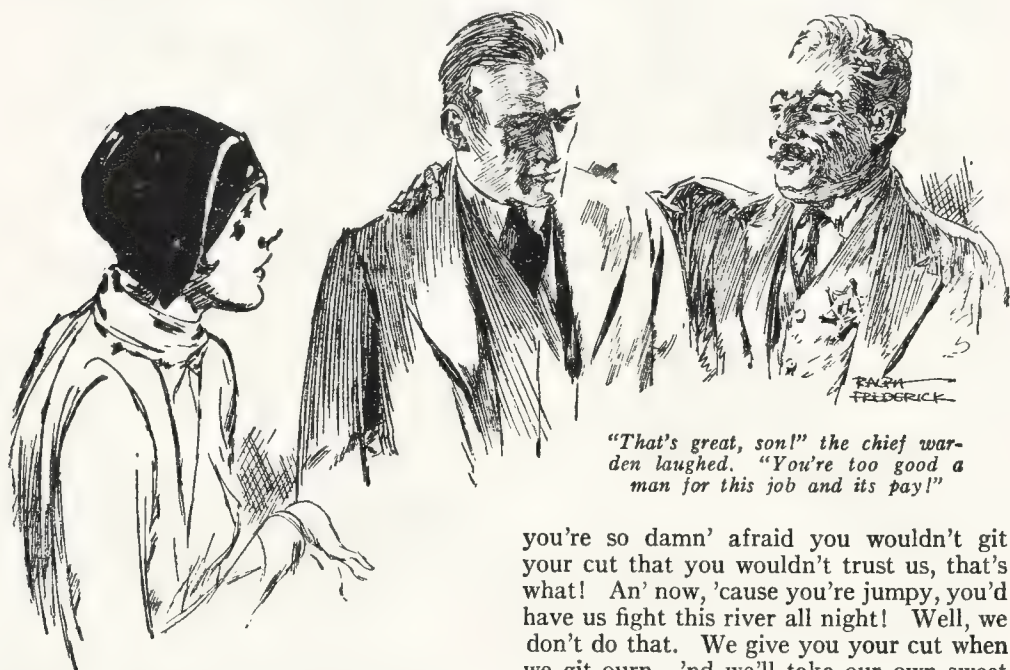
Burton waited until dark. Then, cautiously, he entered the drowned brush and

made his way into deep water. It was cold, icy cold, and he had not even the relief of quick movement to offset the chill. To his knees, to his thighs, to hips and to breast he waded before he emerged from the flooded tangle to the open stream. He drew a deep breath and commenced to swim.

The current was swift, his clothing a heavy drag. He seized the first alder on the far side gratefully and swung along from bush to bush, down to where the

himself cautiously until his eyes were above the level of the window-sill. The light came from a candle-end. It fell on the faces of three men: Plug Anson, Matt Bellew and Thad Elder, sitting on benches, the two trappers smoking, the warden with his head lowered, clasped hands working nervously.

"Who's done th' work?" Bellew demanded. "It wa'n't you, Elder! We done it. All you've done is to help git th' stuff out, which wa'n't required. We know what made you so damn' willin' to help—



"That's great, son!" the chief warden laughed. "You're too good a man for this job and its pay!"

white of the boat gleamed in the darkness at the landing before the camp. He waded out, water running from his clothing to jingle into the stream. He felt of the packs in the skiff, found a buckle, released the strap and his fingers encountered the soft fur and the clammy skin of raw beaver pelts. . . .

The windows of the camp showed a faint glow and he went stealthily forward, dropping to a crouch. Voices came from within.

"It'll take us all day tomorrow!" one said petulantly.

"What's the difference?" another challenged.

"Difference enough! One more day's risk! If you two'd had the guts we'd 've been through with it by ten tomorrow."

"Who's done this work, anyways?" a third demanded, and at that Burton raised

you're so damn' afraid you wouldn't git your cut that you wouldn't trust us, that's what! An' now, 'cause you're jumpy, you'd have us fight this river all night! Well, we don't do that. We give you your cut when we git ourn—'nd we'll take our own sweet time gettin' down."

Elder put his face into his hands.

"Yes. You've got it on me," he growled.

"I'll say we have!" This, from Anson.

"All we'd git'd be a sentence. You'd draw that 'nd lose your job 'nd have your reputation ruined!"

BURTON saw the warden twitch. He sank to his knees outside there trembling, but not with the cold. . . . Sold out! That was his kind, was it? That was the kind that Mamie McIntyre had cast her lot with to get ahead! In the starlight, drenched and chilled, the shacker had his great moment of bitterness.

Plug Anson now became expansive and said that it was worth any warden's time, that Elder's cut would go over four hundred dollars; that there was no chance of

being detected; that in twenty-four hours they would be done. "And you'll have money enough to make quite a hole in any man's debts!" he concluded.

"Debts!" Thad said impatiently. "Bah! Wish debts was all I had on my mind tonight!" Despair was in his tone—a mourning for something precious, lost.

Anson was still talking when the door opened. He stopped between syllables. Bellew made as if to rise and then sank back. Elder sat with his face turned stiffly toward the shacker in the doorway as though frozen in the posture.

"What th' hell do *you* want?" Plug demanded and his voice gritted.

"You're under arrest," Burton said casually and nodded first at Plug, then at Bellew. "You—"

At that Elder came alive and to his feet.

"What d'you mean?" he panted. "What authority have you—"

"Who says we're under arrest?" Bellew cried hoarsely.

Burton jerked a thumb at Elder. "Him," he said. "Leastwise, he's goin' to."

The trappers fixed their eyes on the warden. Incredulity, dismay and hatred stamped them.

"Did you double-cross us?" Plug asked, rising menacingly.

"I don't know what he's getting at, I tell you!" Elder's voice was sharp with hysteria. "I don't— Burton, what the hell do you mean?"

Burton advanced across the threshold, smiling queerly.

"It means you've changed your mind," he said quietly. "You've changed your plan. You're goin' to take these parties into court with their fur."

Anson began to laugh.

"Aint that a good joke! *Aint* that a fine plan? And when we tell that he was in with us, that he was to take a third. . . . How'll *that* sound in court?"

The warden drew an unsteady breath.

"Yes. . . . How'll *that* sound?" he repeated dully.

"Like the squawk of a caught rat!" Burton said and his voice swelled. "With the record you two've got, who'll believe it? I'll shoot straight, even with you all. I suspected this; I trailed you. I was outside that window when you spilled your bellies. I know what you know, but when I go on the stand and perjure myself tellin' that Elder, here, framed you and got me to help him because my reputation's bad

and I wouldn't be suspected by you. . . . *Then* what'll happen?"

"Is that the truth?" Anson's question to the warden was venomous.

Burton answered for Thad. "I said I'd have to perjure myself. That's my lookout."

Hope was rising in the warden's eyes, hope, relief, and a bitter joy. "How about it, Elder?" asked Burton. "Will you—"

HE broke short as Anson's hand swept for the candle. He dropped flat on his belly, flinging himself close to the wall, because he had seen the dip of Plug's other hand, the dull flash of light on steel as the candle-flame was snuffed out. And he was not standing in the doorway when orange stabbed the darkness and the rifle crashed; he was flat on his belly—but before the lever clanked to send a cartridge into the chamber he was up, lunging across the room.

He struck Anson with his shoulder, grasped the rifle-barrel, throwing it upward, holding it there. He struck the trapper in the mouth with his free fist, he clawed for his throat after the blow.

"Get him!" Plug choked, fighting for the gun. "Get him, Matt!"

A body fell on Burton from behind. He whirled, still holding to the rifle, and shook the man off. His assailant stumbled and went down.

"Git his feet, Matt! Git—"

Hands clawed for Burton's pacs, then, and arms twined about an ankle. Lifting his free foot, he stamped savagely. Something crunched beneath his heel and Bellew cried out. Then Anson was being borne backward to the table. His hips caught the edge, he went down, and the shacker was free, rifle in his hands, bringing up against a wall, panting.

"Stay where you are!" he snapped. "I'll blow hell out of the one that moves!"

An odd silence followed, broken by excited breathing and the purr of the fire. Only one place in that stove leaked light: where a kettle sat over an open hole; but he could not see by it.

The door was at the far end and, though armed, he was in no strategic position.

"Strike a light, Anson. Don't move, but strike a light."

"You go to hell!" the man growled.

He was not far away. It seemed, even as he spoke, that he moved.

Burning wood in the stove snapped; a

little puff of extra light showed on the kettle's side.

The rifle dropped to cover it, and on the crash the kettle leaped from its stove hole and red firelight flooded the room.

"Now, will you stand still?" Burton asked quietly and swung the muzzle to cover the crouching Anson, arrested in his creep forward.

"Damn you, I s'pose so," the other growled. . . .

Twenty minutes later Burton's search satisfied him that he possessed the only gun in the place.

"Now you, Anson and Bellew, you set in here. Elder, you and I'd best go outside."

They stood there on the bank of the swollen stream, the stars sharp and clear above them. The night was soft with the feel of spring. For a long interval Burton leaned on the rifle and looked at the shadowed face beside him.

"Course, you've got to carry it the rest of your life," he said.

"Carry what?"

"Knowin' that you sold out."

"God!" And the young warden choked.

"But maybe it'll be a sort of lesson, a warnin'. A man don't like to feel like you do tonight. And if it rids the country of these two, if it stops beaver poachin', then that's my interest. I've always been interested in beaver."

BURTON stopped for a lengthy pause and then rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Yes, I'm real interested in beaver. I'd like to see wardens on the job who feel the same way. You know, your cut on this deal might've been four-five hundred dollars. That'd come handy, but I aint so much interested in how folks get along as I am in beaver. If you'd took it, you've been sold body and soul to these two and you never could've done much on fur again."

He shifted the gun-butt on the ground, tamping the mud.

"Four-five hundred dollars! And if a warden who's got the guts to hold poachin' down keeps at it he might have a chance to get ahead, up to where he'd have other wardens under him and sort of inspire 'em to keep renegades quiet. It can be done, you know. . . . Yes, sir, the right kind of man, gettin' promoted in the department, sure would help a lot; but the right kind, gettin' tempted and yielding and putting himself in the hands of hard customers—"

He shrugged. "He sure wont be much protection to beaver anywhere!"

He cleared his throat.

"How's this sound? At daylight we'll pack this stuff out. By noon we can get to the coastguard station on the lake shore. We can use their telephone to get a truck out for us. A crew with shovels can make it. In two days we'll be back in town. How's that sound?"

"Good," said Elder. "Good! I—" He indicated that he had more to say, but Burton gave him no chance.

"Let's get in there again before those devils hatch something," he said.

ON the third morning they were in town. The courtroom was jammed as Anson and Bellew, without resource, pleaded guilty.

The chief warden was there and when the jail sentence was passed he put his hand on Thad's shoulder and squeezed.

"That's great, son!" he laughed. "Great! I felt you had it in you. I had to wait for it to show, though. And I guess we'll have to take you out of your stamping-ground, now. You're too good a man for this job and its pay."

Ray Burton slipped outside with the first. He watched the others come. The chief came, talking to Mamie. Her eyes were shining with pride, with achievement, with happiness. She looked so young again, so hopeful, so confident, like a woman who is on the way to attainment of a coveted end.

Elder edged his way to where Burton stood. He swallowed before he spoke as if the planned words were difficult to utter.

"I couldn't try before," he said unsteadily. "We weren't alone a minute. But I've been waiting, Burton, to make a—a stab at trying to thank you."

The shacker looked at Mamie, so radiant, so happy with getting ahead.

"I've had my thanks," he said.

The warden seemed more puzzled at the queer look in Burton's face than at his words.

"Thanks? How?"

"Oh, when a man likes anything a lot—like I like beaver—he gets his thanks from seein' them do well."

WHO'S the fellow talking to Thad?" the chief asked Mamie.

The girl looked.

"Oh, him?" she said. "Why, just a shacker from out north."

TANAR of Pellucidar

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

By

EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS

IT is a startling world, this Pellucidar in which Tanar and his primeval companions live—a world of perilous seas and faëry lands forlorn; of the cave-bear and the saber-toothed tiger; of the Buried People, a strange half-blind savage folk who dwell in caves; of those able intrepid seamen the Korsarians, who sail far and harry many a distant coast; of the Place of Awful Shadow, and of many another strange region. The sun hangs ever in the heavens, and having no division of day and night and season, they have no means of computing time.

To this world of Pellucidar in the hollow center of this our earth have penetrated two men of our own external world and time—David Innes and Abner Perry; while experimenting with a tremendously powerful "iron mole," a boring device designed to prospect in the earth's crust for valuable minerals, David and Abner lost control and presently, after terrific adventures, found themselves in this strange primitive reversed cosmos of Pellucidar.

There their adventures had been no less terrific. They had aided the Pellucidarians in their war with the terrible Mahars, vicious winged prehistoric monsters; and contriving to manufacture gunpowder and crude firearms, they had all but exterminated the enemy. But now a new menace threatens them and the people of Pellucidar; and the fascinating story of the amazing events which follow comes to Edgar Rice Burroughs unexpectedly one night by means of the far-reaching waves of the radio.

A powerful raiding armada of a strange semi-civilized white race, the Korsarians, has landed on the coast of Pellucidar and sacked many towns. Retreating at last in their high-decked Elizabethan ships, the Korsarians—a picturesque red-sashed gang armed with medieval arquebuses and led by a burly buccaneer called the Cid—carried off with them the young chieftain Tanar as hostage. And David Innes, giving instructions to the Pellucidarians to build a fleet and sail in pursuit when it is ready, himself sets out in a small boat with only



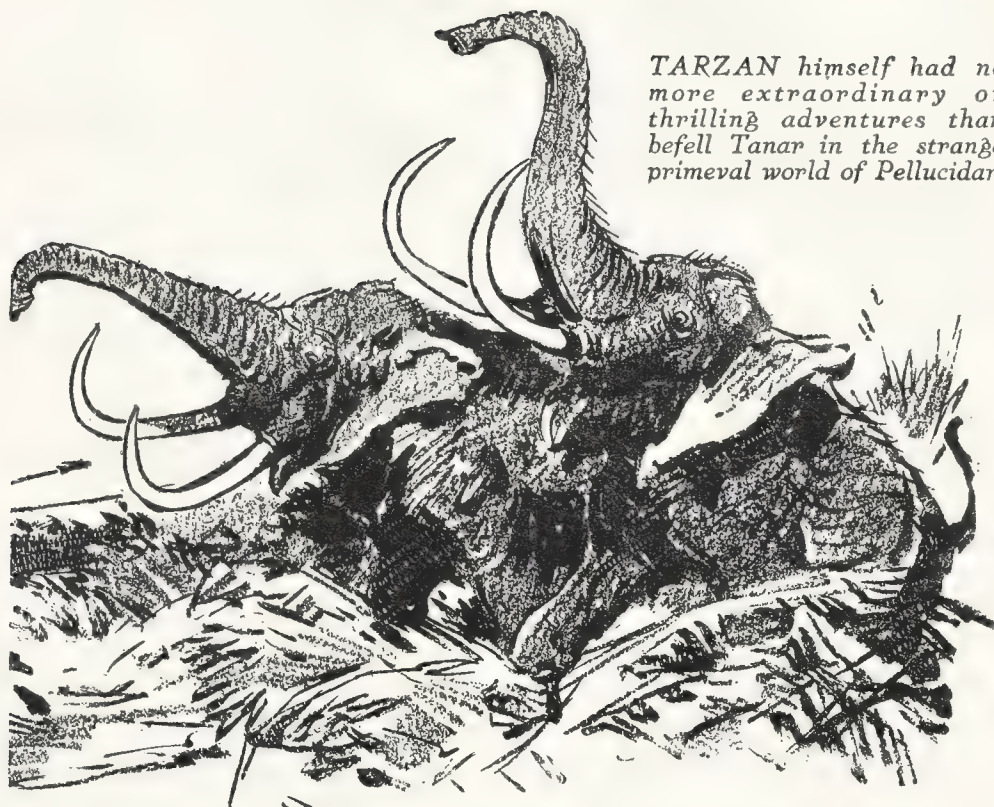
one companion—and a captive Korsarian as a guide—in a forlorn hope of effecting rescue.

Meanwhile on the Korsarian ship Tanar meets the lovely Stellara, supposed to be a daughter of the Cid, but in reality a captive stolen in childhood from the beautiful island of Amiocap. And Tanar wins at least the gratitude of Stellara when he rescues her from the attentions of the brutal Korsarian sub-chief Bohar.

Shortly thereafter a violent tempest scatters the Korsarian armada. The ship of the Cid is all but foundering, and the Korsarians take to the boats while Tanar and Stellara, unobserved, remain with the ship; and drifting unguided, the vessel is washed up on the shores of Stellara's native Amiocap.

The people of Amiocap, however, refuse to accept Stellara's claim to kinship with them. It is their custom to kill all strangers

Copyright, 1929, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Incorporated. All rights reserved.



TARZAN himself had no more extraordinary or thrilling adventures than befell Tanar in the strange primeval world of Pellucidar.

Beyond the barrier loomed two huge tandors, their wicked eyes red with hate, while bravely facing them shouting warriors hurled their stone-tipped spears.

in order that no alien blood or foreign corruption shall mar the Arcadian simplicity of their lives. Tanar and Stellara therefore are imprisoned under guard until the method of their destruction shall have been decided. (*The story continues in detail*):

CHAPTER IV

LETARI

STELLARA and Tanar were conducted to a small hut in the outskirts of the village. The building consisted of but two rooms; the open living-room with the fireplace and a small dark sleeping apartment. Into the latter the prisoners were thrust and a single warrior was left on guard in the living-room to prevent their escape.

In a world where the sun hangs perpetually at zenith there is no darkness and without darkness there is little opportunity

to escape from the clutches of a watchful enemy. Yet never for a moment was the thought of escape absent from the mind of Tanar the Sarian. He studied the sentries and as each one was relieved he tried to enter into conversation with his successor, but all to no avail—the warriors would not talk to him. Sometimes the guards dozed, but the village and the clearing about it were always alive with people so that it appeared unlikely that any opportunity for escape might present itself.

The sentries were changed; food was brought to the prisoners; and when they felt so inclined they slept. Thus only might they measure the lapse of time, if such a thing occurred to them, which doubtless it did not.

Ofttimes they talked together and sometimes Stellara sang—sang the songs of Amiocap that her mother had taught her, and they were happy and contented, al-

though each knew that the specter of death hovered constantly above them. Presently it would strike—but in the meantime they were happy.

"When I was a youth," said Tanar, "I was taken prisoner by the black people with tails. They build their villages among the high branches of lofty trees and at first they put me in a small hut as dark as this and much dirtier. I was very miserable and very unhappy, for I have always been free and I love my freedom, but now I am again a prisoner in a dark hut and in addition I know that I am going to die and I do not want to die, yet I am not unhappy. Why is it, Stellara, do you know?"

"I have wondered about the same thing myself," replied the girl. "It seems to me that I have never been so happy before in my life, but I do not know the reason."

They were sitting close together upon a fiber mat which they had placed near the doorway that they might obtain as much light and air as possible. Stellara's soft eyes looked thoughtfully out upon the little world framed by the doorway of their prison cell. One hand rested listlessly on the mat between them. Tanar's eyes rested upon her profile, and slowly his hand went out and covered hers.

"Perhaps," he said, "I should not be happy if you were not here."

STELLARA turned half-frightened eyes upon him and withdrew her hand. "Don't," she said quickly.

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know, only that it makes me afraid."

The man was about to speak again when a figure darkened the opening in the doorway. A girl had come bringing food. Heretofore it had been a man—a taciturn man who had replied to none of Tanar's questions. But there was no suggestion of taciturnity upon the beautiful, smiling countenance of the girl.

"Here is food," she said. "Are you hungry?"

"Where there is nothing else to do but eat I am always hungry," said Tanar. "But where is the man who brought our food before?"

"That was my father," replied the girl. "He has gone to hunt and I have brought the food in his stead."

"I hope that he never returns from the hunt," said Tanar.

"Why?" demanded the girl. "He is a

good father. Why should you wish him harm?"

"I wish him no harm," replied Tanar, laughing. "I only wish that his daughter would continue to bring our food. She is far more agreeable and much better-looking."

The girl flushed, but it was evident that she was pleased.

"I wanted to come before," she said, "but my father would not let me. I saw you when they brought you into the village and I have wanted to see you again. I never saw a man who looked like you before. You are different from the Amiocapians. Are all the young men of Sari as good-looking as you?"

TANAR laughed. "I am afraid that that is a subject I have never given much thought to," he replied. "In Sari we judge our men by what they do and not by what they look like."

"But you must be a great hunter," said the girl. "You look like a great hunter."

"How do great hunters look?" demanded Stellara with some asperity.

"They look like this man," replied the girl. "Do you know," she continued, "I have dreamed about you many times."

"What is your name?" asked Tanar.

"Letari," replied the girl.

"Letari," repeated Tanar. "That is a pretty name. I hope, Letari, that you will bring our food to us often."

"I shall never bring it again," she said, sadly.

"And why?" demanded Tanar.

"Because no one will bring it again."

"And why is that? Are they going to starve us to death?"

"No, the council of the chiefs has decided that you are both Korsarians and that you must be destroyed."

"And when will that be?" asked Stellara.

"As soon as the hunters return with food. We are going to have a great feast and dance, but I shall not enjoy it. I shall be very unhappy, for I do not wish to see Tanar die."

"How are they going to destroy us?" asked the man.

"Look," said the girl, pointing through the open doorway. There, in the distance, the two prisoners saw men setting two stakes into the ground. "There were many who wanted to give you to the Buried People," said Letari, "but Zural said that it has been so long since we have had a feast and

a dance that he thought that we should celebrate the killing of two Korsarians rather than let the Buried People have all the pleasure, and so they are going to tie you to those two stakes and pile dry wood and brush around you and burn you to death."

Stellara shuddered. "And yet my mother taught me that you were a kindly people," she said.

"Oh, we do not mean to be unkind,"



said Letari, "but the Korsarians have been very cruel to us and Zural believes that the gods will take word to the Korsarians that you were burned to death and that perhaps it will frighten them and keep them away from Amiocap."

Tanar arose to his feet and stood very straight and stiff. The horror of the situation almost overwhelmed him. He looked down at Stellara's golden head, and shuddered. "You cannot mean," he said, "that the men of Amiocap intend to burn this girl alive!"

"Why, yes," said Letari. "It would do no good to kill her first for then her spirit could not tell the gods that she was burned and they could not tell the Korsarians."

"It is hideous," cried Tanar; "and you, a girl yourself, have you no sympathy; have you no heart?"

"I am very sorry that they are going to burn you," said Letari; "as for her, she is a Korsarian and I feel nothing but hatred and loathing for her—but you are different. I know that you are not a Korsarian and I wish that I could save you."

"Will you—would you, if you could?" demanded Tanar.

"Yes, but I cannot."

The conversation relative to escape had been carried on in low whispers, so that the guard would not overhear, but evidently it had aroused his suspicion, for now he arose and came to the doorway of the hut. "What are you talking about?" he de-

"They are going to tie you to those stakes," said Letari, "and burn you to death."

manded. "Why do you stay in here so long, Letari, talking with these Korsarians? I heard what you said and I believe that you are in love with this man."

"What if I am?" demanded the girl. "Do not our gods demand that we love? What else do we live for upon Amiocap but love?"

"The gods do not say that we should love our enemies."

"They do not say that we should not," retorted Letari. "If I choose to love Tanar it is my own affair."

"Clear out!" snapped the warrior. "There are plenty of men in Lar for you to love."

"Ah!" sighed the girl as she passed through the doorway, "but there is none like Tanar."

"The hateful little wanton!" cried Stellara after the girl had left.

"She does not hesitate to reveal what is in her heart," said Tanar. "The girls of Sari are not like that. They would die rather than reveal their love before the man had declared his. But perhaps she is only a child and did not realize what she said."

"A child, nothing!" snapped Stellara. "She knew perfectly well what she was saying and it is quite apparent that you liked it. Very well, when she comes to save you, go with her."

"You do not think that I intended to go with her alone even though an opportunity for escape presented itself through her, do you?" demanded Tanar.

"She told you that she would not help me to escape," Stellara reminded him.

"I know that, but it would be only in the hope of helping you to escape that I would take advantage of her help."

"I would rather be burned alive a dozen times than to escape with her help."

There was a venom in the girl's voice that had never been there before, and Tanar looked at her in surprise. "I do not understand you, Stellara," he said.

"I do not understand myself," said the girl, and burying her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

Tanar knelt quickly beside her and put an arm about her. "Don't," he begged, "please don't."

She pushed him from her. "Go away," she cried. "Don't touch me! I hate you!"

TANAR was about to speak again when he was interrupted by a great commotion at the far end of the village. There were shouts and yells from men, mingled with a thunderous noise that fairly shook the ground, and then the deep booming of drums.

Instantly the men setting the stakes in the ground, where Tanar and Stellara were to be burned, stopped their work, seized their weapons and rushed in the direction from which the noise was coming.

The prisoners saw men, women and children running from their huts and all directed their steps toward the same point. The guard before their door leaped to his feet and stood for a moment looking at the running villagers. Then, without a word or backward glance, he dashed off after them.

Tanar, realizing that for the moment at least they were unguarded, stepped from the dark cell out into the open living apartment and looked in the direction toward which the villagers were running. There he saw the cause of the disturbance and also an explanation of the purpose for which the strange hanging barrier had been erected.

Just beyond the barrier loomed two gigantic mammoths—huge tandors, towering sixteen feet or more in height—their wicked eyes red with hate and rage, their great tusks gleaming in the sunlight, their long, powerful trunks seeking to drag down the barrier from the sharpened stakes of which their flesh recoiled. Facing the mammoths was a shouting horde of warriors and of screaming women and children, while above all rose the thundering din of the drums.

Each time the tandors sought to force their way through the barrier, or brush aside its posts, these swung about so that the sharpened stakes threatened their eyes or pricked the tender flesh of their trunks, while bravely facing them the shouting warriors hurled their stone-tipped spears.

HOWEVER interesting or inspiring the sight might be, Tanar had no time to spare to follow the course of this strange encounter. Turning to Stellara, he seized her hand. "Come," he cried, "now is our chance!" And while the villagers were engrossed with the tandors at the far end of the village, Tanar and Stellara ran swiftly across the clearing and entered the lush vegetation of the forest beyond.

There was no trail and it was with difficulty that they forced their way through the underbrush for a short distance before Tanar finally halted.

"We shall never escape them in this way," he said. "Our spoor is as plain as the spoor of a dyryth after a rain."

"How else then may we escape?" asked Stellara.

Tanar was looking up into the trees, examining them closely. "When I was a prisoner among the black people with long tails," he said, "I had to learn to travel through the trees. This knowledge and the ability have stood me in good stead many times since and I believe that they may prove our salvation now."

"You go then," said Stellara, "and save yourself, for certainly I cannot travel through the trees, and there is no reason why we should both be recaptured when one of us can escape."



Tanar smiled. "You know that I would not do that," he said.

"But what else may you do?" demanded Stellara. "They will follow the trail we are making and recapture us before we are out of hearing of the village."

"We shall leave no trail," said Tanar. "Come!" And leaping lightly to a lower branch he swung himself into the tree that spread above them. "Give me your hand," he said, reaching down to Stellara, and a moment later he had drawn the girl to his side. Then he stood erect and steadied the girl while she arose to her feet. Before them a maze of branches stretched away to be lost in the foliage.

"We shall leave no spoor here," said Tanar.

"I am afraid," said Stellara. "Hold me tightly."

"You will soon become accustomed to it," said Tanar, "and then you will not be afraid. At first I was afraid, but later I could swing through the trees almost as rapidly as the black men themselves."

"I cannot even take a single step," said Stellara. "I know that I shall fall."

"You do not have to take a step," said Tanar. "Put your arms around my neck and hold on tightly." And then he stooped and lifted her with his left arm while she clung tightly to him, her soft white arms encircling his neck.

"How easily you lifted me!" she said; "how strong you are! But no man living could carry my weight through these trees and not fall."

Tanar did not reply, but instead he moved off among the branches seeking sure footing and secure hand-holds as he went.

The girl's soft body was pressed close to his and in his nostrils was the fragrance that he had sensed in his first contact with Stellara aboard the Korsar ship and which now seemed to him a part of her.

AS Tanar swung through the forest, the girl marveled at the strength of the man. She had always considered him a weakling by comparison with the beefy Korsarians, but now she realized that in those smoothly rolling muscles was concealed the power of a superman.

She found a fascination in watching him. He moved so easily and did not seem to tire. Once she let her lips fall until they touched his thick black hair and then, just a little, almost imperceptibly, she tightened her arms about his neck.

Stellara was very happy; then, of a sudden, she recalled Letari and she straightened up and relaxed her hold. "The vile wanton," she said.

"Who?" demanded Tanar. "What are you talking about?"

"That creature Letari," said Stellara.

"Why she is not vile," said Tanar. "I thought she was very nice and she is certainly beautiful."

"I believe you are in love with her," snapped Stellara.

"That would not be difficult," said Tanar. "She seemed very lovable."

"Do you love her?" demanded Stellara.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Tanar.

"Do you?" insisted the girl.

"Would you care if I did?" asked Tanar, softly.

"Most certainly not," said Stellara.

"Then why do you ask?"

"I didn't ask," said Stellara. "I do not care."

"Oh," said Tanar. "I misunderstood," and he moved on in silence, for the men of Sari are not talkative, and Stellara did not know what was in his mind for his face did not reflect the fact that he was laughing inwardly and, anyway, Stellara could not see his face. . . .

Tanar moved always in one direction and his homing instinct assured him that that direction lay toward Sari. As far as the land went he could move unerringly toward the spot in Pellucidar where he was born. Every Pellucidarian can do that, but put them on the water, out of sight of land, and that instinct leaves them, and they have no more conception of direction than would you or I if we were transported

suddenly to a land where there are no points of compass since the sun hangs perpetually at zenith and there is no moon and no stars.

Tanar's only wish at present was to put them as far as possible from the village of Lar. He would travel until they reached the coast for, knowing that Amiocap was an island, he knew that eventually they must come to the ocean. What they should do then was rather vague in his mind. He had visions of building a boat and embarking upon the sea, although he knew perfectly well that this would be madness on the part of a hill dweller such as he.

Presently he felt hungry and he knew that they must have traveled a considerable distance.

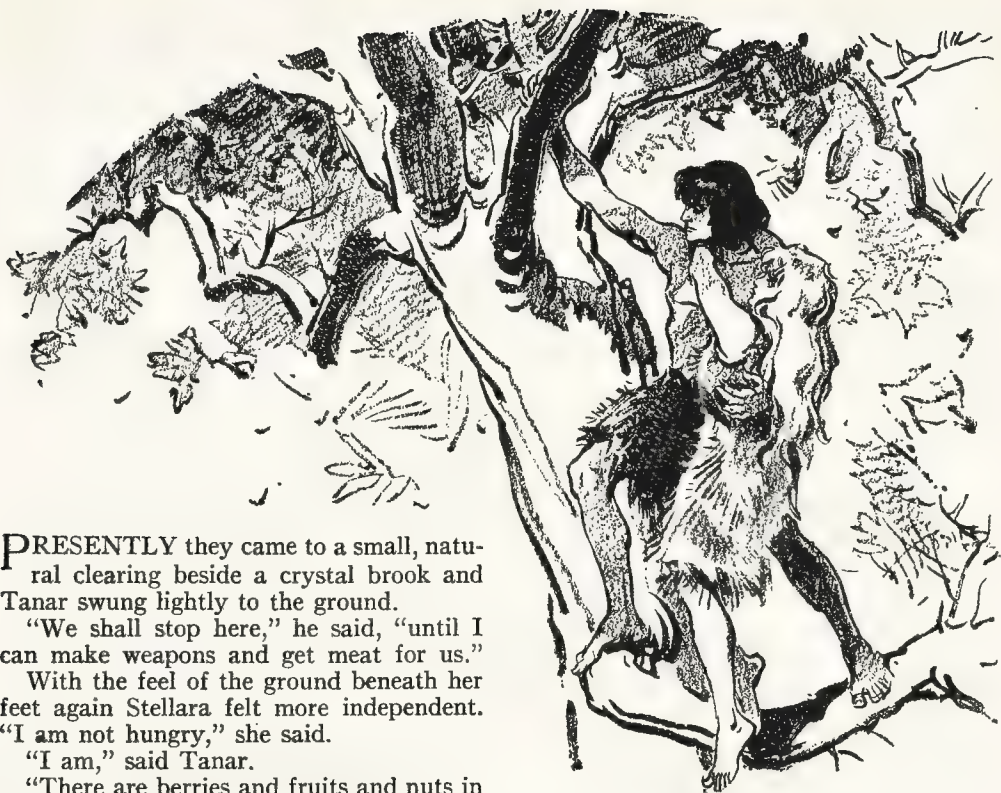
Sometimes Tanar kept track of distance by computing the number of steps that he took for by much practice he had learned to count them almost mechanically, leaving his mind free for other perceptions and thoughts; but here among the branches of the trees, where his steps were not of uniform length, he had thought it not worth the effort to count them and so he could only tell by the recurrence of hunger that they must have covered considerable distance since they left the village of Lar.

DURING their flight through the forest they saw birds and monkeys and other animals, and on several occasions they paralleled or crossed game trails, but as the Amiocapians had stripped him of his weapons he had no means of obtaining meat until he could stop long enough to fashion a bow and some arrows and a spear.

How he missed his spear! From childhood it had been his constant companion and for a long time he had felt almost helpless without it. He had never become entirely accustomed or reconciled to carrying firearms, feeling in the bottom of his primitive and savage heart that there was nothing more dependable than a sturdy, stone-shod spear.

He had rather liked the bow and arrows that Innes and Perry had taught him to make and use, as the arrows had seemed like little spears. At least one could see them, whereas with the strange and noisy weapons, which belched forth smoke and flame, one could not see the projectile at all. It was most unnatural and uncanny.

But Tanar's mind was not occupied with such thoughts at this time. The desire for food was dominant.



As Tanar swung through the forest the girl marveled at his strength.

PRESENTLY they came to a small, natural clearing beside a crystal brook and Tanar swung lightly to the ground.

"We shall stop here," he said, "until I can make weapons and get meat for us."

With the feel of the ground beneath her feet again Stellara felt more independent. "I am not hungry," she said.

"I am," said Tanar.

"There are berries and fruits and nuts in plenty," she insisted. "We should not wait here to be overtaken by the warriors from Lar."

"We shall wait here until I have made weapons," said Tanar, with finality, "and then I shall not only be in a position to make a kill for meat, but I shall be able better to defend you against Zural's warriors."

"I wish to go on," said Stellara. "I do not wish to stay here!" And she stamped her little foot.

Tanar looked at her in surprise. "What is the matter with you, Stellara? You were never like this before!"

"I do not know what is the matter with me," said the girl. "I only know that I wish I was back in Korsar, in the house of the Cid. There, at least, I should be among friends. Here I am surrounded only by enemies."

"Then you would have Bohar the Brutal as a mate, if he survived the storm, or if not he another like him," Tanar reminded her.

"At least he loved me," said Stellara.

"And you loved him?" asked Tanar.

"Perhaps," said Stellara.

There was a peculiar look on Tanar's face as his eyes rested upon the girl. He did not understand her, but he seemed to be trying to. She was looking past him, a strange expression upon her face, when

suddenly she voiced an exclamation of dismay and pointed past him.

"Look!" she cried. "Oh, God—look!"

CHAPTER V

THE TANDOR-HUNTER

SO filled with fear was Stellara's tone that

Tanar felt the hair rise upon his scalp as he wheeled about to face the thing that had so filled the girl with horror, but even had he had time to conjure in his imagination a picture worthy of her fright, he could not have imagined a more fearsome or repulsive thing than that which was advancing upon them.

In conformation it was primarily human, but there the similarity ended. It had arms and legs and it walked erect upon two feet; but such feet! They were huge, flat things with nailless toes—short, stubby toes with webs between them. Its arms were short and in lieu of fingers its hands were armed with three heavy claws. It stood somewhere in the neighborhood of five feet in height and there was not a vestige of hair upon its entire naked body,

the skin of which was of the sickly pallor of a corpse.

But these attributes lent to it but a fraction of its repulsiveness—it was its head and face that were appalling. It had no external ears, there being only two small orifices on either side of its head where these organs are ordinarily located. Its mouth was large with loose, flabby lips that were drawn back now into a snarl, exposing two rows of heavy fangs. Two small openings above the center of the mouth marked the spot where a nose should have been and, to add further to the hideousness of its appearance, it was eyeless, unless bulging protuberances forcing out the skin where the eyes should have been might be called eyes. Here the skin upon the face moved as though great round eyes were rolling beneath. The hideousness of that blank face without eyelids, lashes or eyebrows shocked even the calm and steady nerves of Tanar.

THE creature carried no weapons, but what need had it for weapons, armed as it was with those formidable claws and fangs? Beneath its pallid skin surged great muscles which attested its giant strength and upon its otherwise blank face the mouth alone was sufficient to suggest its diabolical ferocity.

"Run, Tanar!" cried Stellara. "Take to the trees! It is one of the Buried People." But the thing was too close to him to admit of escape even if Tanar had been minded to desert Stellara, and so he stood there quietly awaiting the encounter. Then suddenly, as though to add to the uncanny horror of the situation, the thing spoke. From its flabby, drooling lips issued sounds—mumbled, ghastly sounds that yet took on the semblance of speech until it became intelligible in a distorted way to Tanar and Stellara.

"It is the woman I want," mumbled the creature. "Give me the woman, and the man can go." To Tanar's shocked sensibilities it was as though a mutilated corpse had risen from the grave and spoken, and he fell back a step with a sensation as nearly akin to horror as he had ever experienced.

"You cannot have the woman," said Tanar. "Leave us alone, or I will kill you."

An uncanny scream that was a mixture of laugh and shriek broke from the lips of the thing. "Then die!" it cried, as it launched itself upon the Sarian.

As it closed it struck upward with its heavy claws in an attempt to disembowel its antagonist, but Tanar eluded its first rush by leaping lightly to one side and then, turning quickly, he hurled himself upon the loathsome body and circling its neck with one powerful arm, turned suddenly and, bending his body forward and downward, hurled the creature over his head and heavily to the ground.

INSTANTLY it was up again. Screaming with rage and frothing at the mouth, it struck out wildly with its heavy claws. But Tanar had learned certain things from David Innes that men of the stone age ordinarily do not know, for David had taught him, as he had taught many another young Pellucidarian, the art of self-defense, including boxing, wrestling and jiu-jitsu, and now again they came into good stead as they had upon other occasions since he had mastered them and once more he gave thanks for the fortunate circumstance that had brought David Innes from the outer crust to Pellucidar to direct the destinies of its human race as first emperor.

Combined with his knowledge, his training and his agility was Tanar's great strength, without which these other accomplishments would have been of far lesser value, and so as the creature struck, Tanar parried the blows, fending the wicked talons from his flesh with a strength that surprised his antagonist, since it was fully as great as its own.

But what was still more surprising to the monster was the frequency with which Tanar was able to step in and deliver telling blows to the body and the head which in its awkwardness and lack of skill, it was unable properly to protect.

To one side, watching the battle for which she was the stake, stood Stellara. She might have run away and hidden; she might have made good her escape; but no such thoughts entered her courageous little head. It would have been as impossible for her to desert her champion in the hour of his need as it would have been for him to leave her to her fate, and so she stood there helplessly awaiting the outcome.

To and fro across the clearing the battlers moved, trampling down the lush vegetation that sometimes grew so thickly as to hamper their movements, and now it became apparent to both Stellara and Tanar from the labored breathing of the creature that it was being steadily worn down and

that it lacked the endurance of the Sarian. However, probably sensing something of this itself, it now redoubled its efforts and the ferocity of its attack. But at the same time Tanar discovered a vulnerable spot at which to aim his blows.

Striking for the face he had accidentally touched one of the bulging protuberances that lay beneath the skin where the eyes should have been. At the impact of the blow, light as it was, the creature screamed and leaped backward, instinctively raising one of its claws to the injured organ and thereafter Tanar directed all his efforts toward placing further and heavier blows upon those two bulging spots.

He struck again and landed cleanly a heavy blow upon one of them. With a shriek of pain the creature stepped back and clamped both paws to its hurt.

They were fighting, now, very close to where Stellara stood. The creature's back was toward her and she could have reached out and touched him, so near was he to her. She saw Tanar spring forward to strike again. The creature dropped back quite abreast of her and then suddenly lowering its head it gave vent to a horrid shriek and charged the Sarian with all the hideous ferocity that it could gather.

It seemed as though it had mustered all its remaining vitality and thrown it into this last mad charge. Tanar, his mind and muscles coördinating perfectly, quick to see openings and take advantage of them and equally quick to realize the advantages of retreat, leaped backward to avoid the mad charge and the flailing claws, but as he did so one of his heels struck a low bush and he fell heavily to the ground upon his back.

For the moment he was helpless—in that brief moment the creature could be upon him with those horrid fangs and ripping claws!

Tanar knew it. The thing charging him knew it and Stellara, standing so close to them, knew it, and so quickly did she act that Tanar had scarcely struck the ground as she launched herself bodily upon the charging monster from behind.

AS a football player hurls himself forward to tackle an opponent, so Stellara hurled herself at the creature. Her arms encircled its knees and then slipped down, as he kicked and struggled to free himself, until finally she secured a hold upon one of his skinny ankles just above its

huge foot. There she clung and the creature lunged forward just short of Tanar, but instantly, with a howl of rage, it turned to rend the girl. But that brief instant of delay had been sufficient to permit Tanar to regain his feet and ere ever the talons or fangs could sink into the soft flesh of Stellara, Tanar was upon the creature's back. Fingers of steel encircled its throat, and though it struggled and struck out with its heavy claws it was at last helpless in the clutches of the Sarian.

Slowly, relentlessly, Tanar choked the life from the monster. Then, with an expression of disgust, he cast the corpse aside and stepped quickly to where Stellara was staggering weakly to her feet.

He put his arm about her and for a moment she buried her face in his shoulder and sobbed.

"Do not be afraid, Stellara," he said; "the thing is now dead."

SHE raised her face towards his. "Let us go away from here," she cried. "I am afraid! There may be more of the Buried People about. There must be an entrance to their underworld near here, for they do not wander far from such openings."

"Yes," Tanar agreed; "until I have weapons I wish to see no more of them."

"They are horrible creatures," said Stellara, "and if there had been two of them we should both have been lost."

"What are they?" asked Tanar. "You seem to know about them. Where had you ever seen one before?"

"I have never seen one until just now," said she, "but my mother told me about them. They are feared and hated by all Amiocapians. They are Coropies and they inhabit dark caverns and tunnels beneath the surface of the ground. That is why we call them the Buried People. They live on flesh and wandering about the jungle they gather up the remains of our kills and devour the bodies of wild beasts that have died in the forest; but being afraid of our spears they do not venture far from the openings that lead down into their dark world. Occasionally they waylay a lone hunter and less often they come close to one of our villages and seize a woman or a child. No one has ever entered their world and escaped to tell about it, so that what my mother has told me about them is only what our people have imagined as to the underworld where the Buried People dwell,

for there has never been any Amiopian warrior brave enough to venture into the dark recesses of one of their tunnels, or if there has been such he has not returned to tell of it."

"And if the kindly Amiociapians had not decided to burn us to death, they might have given us to the Buried People?" asked Tanar.

slept he slept, and then once more they resumed their flight.

Strengthened and refreshed by food and sleep they renewed their journey in higher spirits and greater hopefulness. The village of Lar lay far behind and since they had left it they had seen no other village nor any sign of man.

While Stellara had slept Tanar had



"Come, Stellara," cried Tanar. "Here is a warrior who would see if you are a Korsarian."

"Yes, they would have taken us and bound us to trees close to one of the entrances to the underworld. But do not blame my mother's people for that, as they would have been doing only that which they considered right and proper."

"Perhaps they are a kindly people," said Tanar, with a grin, "for it was certainly far more kindly to accord us death by burning at the stake than to have left us to the horrid attentions of the Coropies. But come, we will take to the trees again, for this spot does not look as beautiful to me now as when we first looked upon it."

ONCE more they took up their flight among the branches and just as they were commencing to feel the urge to sleep Tanar discovered a small deer in a game trail beneath them, and making his kill the two satisfied their hunger. Then with small branches and great leaves Tanar constructed a platform in a tree—a narrow couch, where Stellara lay down to sleep while he stood guard, and after she had

busied himself in fashioning crude weapons against the time when he might find proper materials for the making of better ones. A slender branch of hardwood, gnawed to a point by his strong white teeth, must answer him for a spear. His bow was constructed of another branch and strung with tendons taken from the deer he had killed, while his arrows were slender shoots cut from a tough shrub that grew plentifully throughout the forest. He fashioned a second, lighter spear for Stellara, and thus armed each felt a sense of security that had been entirely wanting before.

On and on they went; three times they ate and once again they slept, and still they had not reached the seacoast.

The great sun hung overhead; a gentle, cooling breeze moved through the forest; birds of gorgeous plumage and little monkeys unknown to the outer world flew or scampered, sang or chattered as the man and the woman disturbed them in their passage. It was a peaceful world and to Tanar, accustomed to the savage, carniv-

orous beasts that overran the great mainland of his birth, it seemed a very safe and colorless world; yet he was content that nothing was interfering with their progress toward escape.

Stellara had said no more about desiring to return to Korsar and the plan that always hovered among his thoughts included taking Stellara back to Sari with him.

The peaceful trend of Tanar's thoughts



was suddenly shattered by the sound of shrill trumpeting. So close it sounded that it might almost have been directly beneath him, and an instant later as he parted the foliage ahead of him he saw the cause of the disturbance.

The jungle ended here upon the edge of open meadowland that was dotted with small clumps of trees. In the foreground there were two figures—a warrior fleeing for his life and behind him a huge tandor, which, though going upon three legs, was sure to overtake the man soon.

Tanar took the entire scene in at a glance and was aware that here was a lone tandor-hunter who had failed to hamstring his prey in both hind legs.

It is seldom that man hunts the great tandor single-handed and only the bravest or the most rash would essay to do so. Ordinarily there are several hunters, two of whom are armed with heavy stone axes. While the others make a noise to attract the attention of the tandor and hide the sound of the approach of the ax-men, the latter creep cautiously through the underbrush from the rear of the great animal until each is within striking distance of a hind leg. Then simultaneously they hamstring the monster, which, lying helpless, they dispatch with heavy spears and arrows.

He who would alone hamstring a tandor

must be endowed not only with great strength and courage, but must be able to strike two unerring blows with his ax in such rapid succession that the beast is crippled almost before it realizes that it has been attacked.

It was evident to Tanar that this hunter had failed to get in his second blow quickly enough and now he was at the mercy of the great beast.

Since they had started upon their flight through the trees Stellara had overcome her fear and was now able to travel alone with only occasional assistance from Tanar. She had been following the Sarian and now she stood at his side, watching the tragedy being enacted below them.

"He will be killed!" she cried. "Can we not save him?"

This thought had not occurred to Tanar, for was the man not an Amiocapian and an enemy? But there was something in the girl's tone that spurred the Sarian to action. Perhaps it was the instinct in the male to exhibit his prowess before the female. Perhaps it was because at heart Tanar was brave and magnanimous, or perhaps it was because that among all the other women in the world it was Stellara who had spoken. Who may know? Perhaps Tanar did not know himself what prompted his next act.

SHOUTING a word that is familiar to all tandor-hunters and which is most nearly translatable into English as "Reverse!" he leaped to the ground almost at the side of the charging tandor, and simultaneously he carried his spear-hand back and drove the heavy shaft deep into the beast's side, just behind its left shoulder. Then he leaped back into the forest expecting that the tandor would do precisely what it did do.

With a squeal of pain it turned upon its new tormentor.

The Amiocapian, who still clung to his heavy ax, had heard, as though it was a miracle from the gods, the familiar signal that had burst so suddenly from Tanar's lips. It had told him what the other would attempt and he was ready, with the result that he turned back toward the beast at the instant that it wheeled to charge after Tanar, and as it crashed into the undergrowth of the jungle in pursuit of the Sarian the Amiocapian overtook it. The great ax moved swiftly as lightning and the huge beast, trumpeting with rage, sank

helplessly to the ground and rolled over on its side.

"Down!" shouted the Amiocapian, to advise Tanar that the attack had been successful.

The Sarian returned and together the two warriors dispatched the great beast, while above them Stellara remained among the concealing verdure of the trees, for the women of Pellucidar do not rashly expose themselves to view of enemy warriors. In this instance she knew that it would be safer to wait and discover the attitude of the Amiocapian toward Tanar. Perhaps he would be grateful and friendly, but there was the possibility that he might not.

WHEN the beast was dispatched, the two men faced one another. "Who are you," demanded the Amiocapian, "who came so bravely to the rescue of a stranger? You are not of Amiocap."

"My name is Tanar, and I am from the kingdom of Sari, that lies far away on the distant mainland. I was captured by the Korsarians, who invaded the empire of which Sari is a part. They were taking me and other prisoners back to Korsar when the fleet was overtaken by a terrific storm and the ship upon which I was confined was so disabled that it was deserted by its crew. Drifting helplessly with wind and current it finally bore us to the shores of Amiocap, where we were captured by warriors from the village of Lar. They did not believe our story, but thought that we were Korsarians and they were about to destroy us when we succeeded in making our escape.

"If you do not believe me," continued the Sarian, "then one of us must die; for under no circumstances will we return to Lar to be burned at the stake."

"Whether I believe you or not," replied the Amiocapian, "I should be beneath the contempt of all men were I to permit any harm to befall one who has just saved my life at the risk of his own."

"Very well," said Tanar. "We shall go our way in the knowledge that you will not reveal our whereabouts to the men of the village of Lar."

"You say 'we,'" said the Amiocapian. "You are not alone, then?"

"No, there is another with me," replied Tanar.

"Perhaps I can help you," said the Amiocapian. "It is my duty to do so. In what direction are you going and how do you plan to escape from Amiocap?"

"We are seeking the coast where we hope to be able to build a craft and to cross the ocean to the mainland."

The Amiocapian shook his head. "That will be difficult, nay, impossible," he said.

"We may only make the attempt," said Tanar, "for it is evident that we cannot remain here among the people of Amiocap, who will not believe that we are not Korsarians."

"You do not look at all like the Korsarians," said the warrior. "Where is your companion? Does he look like one?"

"My companion is a woman," replied Tanar.

"If she looks no more like a Korsarian than you, then it were easy to believe your story and I, for one, am willing to believe it and willing to help you. There are other villages upon Amiocap than Lar and other chiefs than Zural. We are all bitter against the Korsarians, but we are not all blinded by our hate as is Zural. Fetch your companion and if she does not appear to be a Korsarian, I will take you to my own village and see that you are well treated. If I am in doubt I will permit you to go your way; nor shall I mention the fact to others that I have seen you."

"That is fair enough," said Tanar, and then, turning, he called to the girl: "Come, Stellara! Here is a warrior who would see if you are a Korsarian."

The girl dropped lightly to the ground from the branches of the tree above the two men.

As the eyes of the Amiocapian fell upon her he stepped back with an exclamation of shock and surprise.

"Gods of Amiocap!" he cried. "Allara!"

IN amazement the two stared at him. "No, not Allara," said Tanar, "but Stellara, her daughter. Who are you that you should so quickly recognize the likeness?"

"I am Fedol," said the man, "and Allara was my mate."

"Then this is your daughter, Fedol," said Tanar.

The warrior shook his head, sadly. "No," he said, "I can believe that she is the daughter of Allara—but her father must have been a Korsarian for Allara was stolen from me by the men of Korsar. She is a Korsarian and though my heart urges me to accept her as my daughter, the customs of Amiocap forbid. Go your way in peace. If I can protect you I shall, but I cannot accept you, or take you to my village."

Stellara came close to Fedol, her eyes searching the tanned skin upon his left shoulder.

"You are Fedol," she said, pointing to the red birthmark upon his skin, "and here is the proof that my mother gave me, transmitted to me through your blood, that I am the daughter of Fedol." And she turned her left shoulder to him, and there lay upon the white skin a small, round, red mark identical with that upon the left shoulder of the Amiocapian.

For a moment Fedol stood spellbound,

asked Stellara, "or will they wish to destroy us, as did the men of Lar?"

"I am chief," said Fedol. "Even if they questioned you, they will do as I command—but there will be no question, for the proof is beyond dispute; they will accept you as the daughter of Fedol and Al-lara, as I have accepted you."



"Here is the proof that I am the daughter of Fedol." And she turned her left shoulder to him.

his eyes fixed upon Stellara's shoulder. Then he took her into his arms and held her closely.

"My daughter!" he murmured. "Allara come back to me in the blood of our blood and the flesh of our flesh!"

CHAPTER VI

THE ISLAND OF LOVE

THE noonday sun of Pellucidar shone down upon a happy trio as Fedol guided Stellara and Tanar towards the village of Paraht, where he ruled as chief.

"Will they receive us there as friends,"

"And Tanar?" asked Stellara. "Will you protect him, too?"

"Your word is sufficient that he is not a Korsarian," replied Fedol. "He may remain with us as long as he wishes."

"What will Zural think of this?" asked Tanar. "He has condemned us to die. Will he not insist that the sentence be carried out?"

"Seldom do the villagers of Amiocap war one against the other," replied Fedol; "but if Zural wishes war he shall have it ere ever I shall give up you or my daughter to the burning stake of Lar."

GREAT was the rejoicing when the people of Paraht saw their chief, whom they had thought lost to them forever, returning. They clustered about him with glad cries of welcome, which were suddenly stilled by loud shouts of "The Korsarians! The Korsarians!" as the eyes of some of the people alighted upon Tanar and Stellara.

"Who cried 'Korsarians?'" demanded Fedol. "What know you of these people?"

"I know them," replied a tall warrior. "I am from Lar. There are six others with me and we have been searching for these Korsarians, who escaped just before they were to have been burned at the stake. We will take them back with us and Zural will rejoice that you have captured them."

"You will take them nowhere," said Fedol. "They are not Korsarians. This one," and he placed a hand upon Stellara's shoulder, "is my daughter, and the man is a warrior from distant Sari. He is the son of the king of that country, which lies far away upon a mainland unknown to us."

"They told that same story to Zural," said the warrior from Lar; "but he did not believe them. None of us believed them. I was with Vulhan and his party when we took them from the Korsar ship that brought them to Amiocap."

"At first I did not believe them," said Fedol, "but Stellara convinced me that she is my daughter, just as I can convince you of the truth of her statement."

"How?" demanded the warrior.

"By the birthmark on my left shoulder," replied Fedol. "Look at it, and then compare it with the one upon her left shoulder. No one who knew Allara can doubt that Stellara is her daughter, so closely does the girl resemble her mother, and being Allara's daughter how could she inherit the birthmark upon her left shoulder from any other sire than me?"

PUZZLED, the warriors from Lar shook their heads. "It would seem the best of proof," replied their spokesman.

"It is the best of proof," said Fedol. "It is all that I need. It is all that the people of Paraht need. Take the word to Zural and the people of Lar and I believe that they will accept my daughter and Tanar as we are accepting them, and I believe that they will be willing to protect them as we intend to protect them from all enemies, whether from Amiocap or elsewhere."

"I shall take your message to Zural," replied the warrior; and soon they departed.

Fedol prepared a room in his house for Stellara and assigned Tanar to a large building occupied solely by bachelors.

Plans were made for a great feast to celebrate the coming of Stellara and a hundred men were dispatched to fetch the ivory and the meat of the tandor that Fedol and Tanar had slain.

FEDOL decked Stellara with ornaments of bone and ivory and gold. She wore the softest furs and the gorgeous plumage of rare birds. The people of Paraht loved her and Stellara was happy.

Tanar was accepted at first by the men of the tribe with some reservations, not untinged with suspicion. He was their guest by the order of their chief and they treated him as such, but presently, when they came to know him and particularly after he had hunted with them, they liked him for himself and made him one of them.

To Tanar the Sarian the Amiocapians were at first an enigma. Their tribal life and all their customs were based primarily upon love and kindness. Harsh words, bickering and scolding were practically unknown among them. These attributes of the softer side of man appeared at first weak and effeminate to the Sarian, but when he found them combined with great strength and rare courage his admiration for the Amiocapians knew no bounds, and he soon recognized in their attitude toward one another and toward life a philosophy that he hoped he might make clear to his own Sarians.

The Amiocapians considered love the most sacred of the gifts of the gods and the greatest power for good, and they practiced liberty of love without license. So while they were not held in slavery by senseless man-made laws that denied the laws of god and nature, yet they were pure and virtuous to a degree beyond that which Tanar had known in any other people.

With hunting and dancing and feasting, with tests of skill and strength in which the men of Amiocap contended in friendly rivalry, life for Stellara and Tanar was ideally happy.

Less and less often did the Sarian think of Sari. Sometime he would build a boat and return to his native country, but there was no hurry; he would wait; and gradually even that thought faded almost entirely from his mind. He and Stellara were often together. They found a measure of happiness and contentment in one another's

society that was lacking at other times or with other people. Tanar had never spoken of love; perhaps he had not thought of love—for it seemed that he was always engaged upon some enterprise of the hunt, or contending in some of the sports and games of the men. His body and his mind were occupied—a condition which sometimes excludes thoughts of love—but wherever he went or whatever he did the face and figure of Stellara hovered ever in the background of his thoughts.

Without realizing it, perhaps, his every thought and every act was influenced by the sweet loveliness of the chief's daughter. Her friendship he took for granted and it gave him great happiness, though he did not speak of love. But Stellara was a woman, and women live on love.

IN the village of Paraht she saw the girls openly avowing their love to men, but she was still bound by the customs of Korsar and it would have been impossible for her to bring herself to tell a man that she loved him until he had avowed his love. And so hearing no word of love from Tanar, she was content with his friendship. Perhaps she too had given no more thought to the matter of love than he.

But there was another who did harbor thoughts of love. It was Doval, the Adonis of Paraht. In all Amiicap there was no handsomer youth than Doval. Many were the girls who had avowed their love to him, but his heart had been unmoved until he had looked upon Stellara.

Doval came often to the house of Fedol the chief. He brought presents of skin and ivory and bone to Stellara and they were much together. Tanar saw and he was troubled, though why he was troubled he did not know.

The people of Paraht had eaten and slept many times since the coming of Tanar and Stellara and as yet no word had come from Zural, or the village of Lar, in answer to the message that Fedol had sent, but now, at last, there entered the village a party of warriors from Lar, and Fedol, sitting upon the chief's chair, received them in the tiled living-room of his home.

"Welcome, men of Lar," said the chief. "Fedol welcomes you to the village of Paraht and awaits with impatience the message that you bring him from his friend Zural the chief."

"We come from Zural and the people of Lar," said the spokesman "with a message

of friendship for Fedol and Paraht. Zural, our chief, has commanded us to express to you his deep sorrow for the unintentional wrong that he did your daughter and the warrior from Sari. He is convinced that Stellara is your daughter and that the man is no Korsarian, if you are convinced of these facts, and he has sent presents to them and to you and with these presents an invitation for you to visit the village of Lar and bring Stellara and Tanar with you that Zural and his people may make amends for the wrong which they unwittingly did them."

Fedol and Tanar and Stellara accepted the proffered friendship of Zural and his people, and a feast was prepared in honor of the visitors.

While these preparations were in progress a girl entered the village from the jungle. She was a dark-haired girl of extraordinary beauty. Her soft skin was scratched and soiled as from a long journey, and her hair was disheveled, but her eyes were bright with happiness and her teeth gleamed from between lips that were parted in a smile of triumph and expectation.

She made her way directly through the village to the house of Fedol and when the warriors of Lar descried her they exclaimed with astonishment.

"Letari!" cried one of them. "Where did you come from? What are you doing in the village of Paraht?"

But Letari did not answer. Instead she walked directly to where Tanar stood.

"I have come to you," she said. "I have died many a death from loneliness and sorrow since you ran away from the village of Lar, and when the warriors returned and said that you were safe in the village of Paraht I determined to come here. And so when Zural sent these warriors to bear his message to Fedol I followed them. The way has been hard and though I kept close behind them there were many times when wild beasts menaced me and I feared that I should never reach you—but at last I am here."

"But why have you come?" demanded Tanar.

"Because I love you," replied Letari. "Before the men of Lar and all the people of Paraht I proclaim my love."

TANAR flushed. In all his life he had never been in so embarrassing a position. All eyes were turned upon him and among them were the eyes of Stellara.

"Well?" demanded Fedol, looking at Tanar.

"The girl is mad," said the Sarian. "She cannot love me for she scarcely knows me. She never spoke to me but once before and that was when she brought food to Stellara and me when we were prisoners in the village of Lar."

"I am not mad," said Letari. "I love you."

"Will you have her?" asked Fedol.

"I do not love her," said Tanar.

"We will take her back to the village of Lar with us when we go," said one of the warriors.

"I shall not go," cried Letari. "I love him and I shall stay here forever."

The girl's declaration of love for Tanar seemed not to surprise anyone but the Sarian. It aroused little comment and no ridicule. The Amiocapians, with the possible exception of Stellara, took it as a matter of course. It was the most natural thing in the world for the people of this island of love to declare themselves publicly in matters pertaining to their hearts or to their passions.

That the general effect of such a policy was not nor ever had been detrimental to the people as a race was evident by their high intelligence, the perfection of their physique, their great beauty and their unquestioned courage. Perhaps the opposite custom, which has prevailed among most of the people of the outer crust for so many ages, is responsible for the unnumbered millions of unhappy human beings who are warped or twisted mentally, morally or physically.

BUT with such matters the mind of Letari was not concerned. It was not troubled by any consideration of posterity. All she thought of was that she loved the handsome stranger from Sari and that she wanted to be near him. She came close to him and looked up into his face.

"Why do you not love me?" she asked "Am I not beautiful?"

"Yes, you are very beautiful," he said; "but no one can explain love, least of all I. Perhaps there are qualities of mind and character—things that we can neither see nor feel nor hear—that draw one heart forever to another."

"But I am drawn to you," said the girl. "Why are not you attracted to me?"

Tanar shook his head, for he did not know. He wished that the girl would go

away and leave him alone for she made him feel uneasy and restless and most uncomfortable. But Letari had no idea of leaving him alone. She was near him and there she intended to stay until they dragged her away and took her back to Lar, if they were successful in so doing. But she had determined in her little head that she should run away from them at the first opportunity and hide in the jungle until she could return to Paraht and Tanar.

"Will you talk to me?" she asked. "Perhaps if you talk to me you will love me."

"I will talk to you," said Tanar; "but I shall not love you."

"Let us walk a little way from these people where we may talk," she said.

"Very well," said Tanar. He was only too anxious himself to get away where he might hide his embarrassment.

LETARI led the way down the village street, her soft arm brushing his. "I should be a good mate," she said, "for I should love only you, and if after awhile you did not like me, you could send me away, for that is one of the customs of Amiocap—that when one of two people ceases to love they shall no longer be mates."

"But they do not become mates unless they both love," insisted Tanar.

"That is true," admitted Letari, "but presently you shall love me. I know that, for all men love me. I could have for my mate any man in Lar that I chose."

"You do not feel unkindly towards yourself," said Tanar, with a grin.

"Why should I?" asked Letari. "Am I not beautiful and young?"

Stellara watched Tanar and Letari walking down the village street. She saw how close together they walked and it seemed that Tanar was very much interested in what Letari had to say to him. Doval was standing at her side. She turned to him.

"It is noisy here," she said. "There are too many people. Walk with me to the end of the village."

It was the first time that Stellara had ever indicated a desire to be alone with him and Doval felt a strange thrill of elation.

"I will walk with you to the end of the village, Stellara, or to the end of Pellucidar forever because I love you," he said.

The girl sighed and shook her head. "Do not talk about love," she begged. "I merely wish to walk and there is no one else here to walk with me."



"Why will you not love me?" asked Doval, as they left the house of the chief and entered the main street of the village. "Is it because you love another?"

"No," cried Stellara, vehemently. "I love no one! I hate all men!"

Doval shook his head in perplexity. "I cannot understand you," he said. "Many girls have told me that they loved me. I think that I could have almost any girl in Amiocap as my mate if I asked her; but strangely enough, you, the only one that I love, will not have me."

FOR a few moments Stellara was silent in thought. Then she turned to the handsome youth at her side.

"You are very sure of yourself, Doval," she said, "but I do not believe that you are right. I could name a girl who would not have you; who, no matter how hard you tried to make her, would not love you."

"If you mean yourself, then there is one," he said, "but there is no other."

"Oh, yes, there is," insisted Stellara.

"Who is she, then?" demanded Doval incredulously.

"Letari, the dark-haired girl from Lar," said Stellara.

Doval laughed. "She throws her love at the first stranger that comes to Amiocap," he said. "She would be too easy."

As the Korsarians resumed their march toward the ocean, Stellara walked among them with bent head and unseeing eyes.

"Nevertheless you cannot make her love you," insisted Stellara.

"I do not intend to try," said Doval. "I do not love her. I love only you, and if I made her love me of what good would that be toward making you love me? No, I shall spend my time trying to win you."

"You are afraid," said Stellara. "You know that you would fail."

"It would do me no good if I succeeded," insisted Doval.

"It would make me like you very much better than I do now," said Stellara.

"You mean that?" asked Doval.

"I most certainly do," said Stellara.

"Then I shall make the girl love me," said Doval. "And if I do you promise to be mine?"

"I said nothing of the kind," said Stellara. "I only said that I should like you very much better than I do now."

"Well, that is something," said Doval. "If you will like me very much better than you do now that is at least a step in the right direction."

"However, there is no danger of that," said Stellara, "for you cannot make her love you."

"Wait, and see," said Doval.

As Tanar and Letari turned to come back along the village street they passed Doval and Stellara, and Tanar saw that they were walking very close together and whispering in low tones. The Sarian scowled; suddenly he discovered that he did not like Doval and he wondered why, because he had always thought Doval a very fine fellow. Presently it occurred to him that the reason was that Doval was not good enough for Stellara, but then if Stellara loved him, that was all there was to it; and with the thought that perhaps Stellara loved him Tanar became angry with Stellara. What could she see in this Doval, he wondered, and what business had Doval to walk alone with her in the village streets? Had not he, Tanar, always had Stellara to himself? Never before had any one interfered, although all the men liked Stellara. Well, if Stellara liked Doval better than she did him, he would show her that he did not care. He, Tanar the Sarian, son of Ghak, king of Sari, would not let any woman make a fool of him! And so he ostentatiously put his arm around the slim shoulders of Letari and walked thus slowly the length of the village street; nor did Stellara fail to see.

At the feast that was given in honor of the messengers sent by Zural, Stellara sat by Doval and Tanar had Letari at his side; and Doval and Letari were both happy.

After the feast was over most of the villagers returned to their houses and slept, but Tanar was restless and unhappy and could not sleep so he took his weapons, his heavy spear shod with bone, his bow and his arrows, and his stone knife with the ivory handle, that Fedol the chief had given him, and went alone into the forest to hunt.

If the villagers slept an hour or a day is a matter of no moment, since there was no way of measuring the time. When they awoke—some sooner, some later—they went about the various duties of their life. Letari sought for Tanar, but she could not find him; instead she came upon Doval.

"You are very beautiful," said the man.

"I know it," replied Letari.

"You are the most beautiful girl that I have ever seen," insisted Doval.

Letari looked at him steadily for a few moments. "I never noticed you before," she said. "You are very handsome. You are quite the handsomest man that I ever saw."

"That is what everyone says," replied

Doval. "Many girls have told me that they loved me, but still I have no mate."

"A woman wants something beside a handsome face in her mate," said Letari.

"I am very brave," said Doval, "and I am a great hunter. I like you. Come, let us walk together." And Doval put his arm about the girl's shoulders and together they walked along the village street while, from the doorway of her sleeping apartment in the home of her father the chief, Stellara watched, and as she watched a smile touched her lips.

OVER the village of Paraht rested the peace of Amiocap and the calm of eternal noon. The children played at games beneath the shade of the trees that had been left dotting the village here and there when the clearing had been made. The women worked upon skins, strung beads or prepared food. The men looked to their weapons against the next hunt, or lolled idly on furs in their open living-rooms—those who were not still sleeping off the effects of the heavy feast. Fedol the chief was bidding farewell to Zural's messengers and entrusting to them a gift for the ruler of Lar, when suddenly the peace and quiet was shattered by hoarse cries and a shattering burst of musketry.

Instantly all was pandemonium. Then women and warriors rushed from their homes; shouts, curses and screams filled the air.

"Korsarians! Korsarians!" rang through the village, as the bearded ruffians, taking advantage of the surprise and confusion of the villagers, rushed rapidly forward to profit by the advantage they had gained.

CHAPTER VII

"KORSARIANS!"

TANAR the Sarian hunted through the primeval forest of Amiocap. Already his reputation as a hunter stood high among the men of Paraht, but it was not to add further luster to his fame that he hunted now. It was to quiet a restlessness that would not permit him to sleep—restlessness and a strange depression that was almost unhappiness, but his thoughts were not always upon the hunt. Visions of Stellara often walked in front of him, the golden sunlight on her golden hair, and then beside her he saw the handsome Doval with an arm about her shoulders. He closed



In a moment he was disarmed and his ankles and wrists securely bound. Then he lay looking into the horrid faces of the Buried People.

his eyes and shook his head to dispel the vision, but it persisted and so he tried thinking of Letari, the beautiful maiden from Lar.

Yes, Letari was beautiful. What eyes she had! And she loved him. Perhaps, after all, it would be as well to mate with her and remain forever upon Amiocap—but presently he found himself comparing Letari with Stellara and he found himself wishing that Letari possessed more of the characteristics of Stellara. She had not the character nor the intelligence of the daughter of Fedol. She offered him none of the restful companionship that had made his association with Stellara so infinitely happy.

He wondered if Stellara loved Doval, and if Doval loved Stellara, and with the thought he halted in his tracks and his eyes went wide as a sudden realization burst for the first time upon his consciousness.

"God!" he exclaimed aloud. "What a fool I have been! I have loved her always and did not know it!" And wheeling about he set off at a brisk trot in the direction of Paraht, all thoughts of his hunt erased from his mind.

Tanar had hunted far, much farther than he had thought, but at last he came to the village of Fedol the chief. As he passed through the hanging barrier of Paraht, the first people that he saw were Letari and Doval. They were walking side by side and very close and the man's arm was about the slim shoulders of the girl.

Letari looked at Tanar in astonishment

as she recognized him. "We all thought the Korsarians had taken you with them," she cried.

"Korsarians!" exclaimed Tanar. "What Korsarians?"

"They were here," said Doval. "They raided the village, but we drove them off with just a small loss. There were not many of them. Where were you?"

"After the feast I went into the forest to hunt," said Tanar. "I did not know that there was a Korsarian upon the island of Amiocap."

"It is just as well that you were not here," said Letari, "for while you were away I have learned that I love Doval."

"Where is Stellara?" demanded Tanar.

"She was taken by the Korsarians," said Doval. "Thank God that it was not you, Letari!"—and stooping, he kissed the girl upon the lips.

With a cry of grief and rage Tanar ran swiftly to the house of Fedol the chief. "Where is Stellara?" he demanded, springing unceremoniously into the living-room.

AN old woman looked up from where she sat with her face buried in her hands. She was the sole occupant of the room. "The Korsarians took her," she said.

"Where is Fedol?" demanded Tanar.

"He has gone with warriors to try to rescue her," said the old woman, "but it is useless. They who are taken by the Korsarians never come back."

"Which way did they go?" asked Tanar.

Sobbing with grief, the old woman pointed in the direction taken by the Korsarians, and again she buried her face in her hands, grieving for the misfortune that had overtaken the house of Fedol the chief.

Almost immediately Tanar picked up the trail of the Korsarians, which he could identify by the imprints of their heeled boots, and he saw that Fedol and his warriors had not followed the same trail, evidencing the fact that they must have gone in the wrong direction to succor Stellara.

Sick with anguish, maddened by hate, the Sarian plunged on through the forest. Plain to his eyes lay the spoor of his quarry. In his heart was a rage that gave him the strength of many men.

IN a little glade, partially surrounded by limestone cliffs, a small company of ragged, bewhiskered men had halted to rest. Where they had halted a tiny spring broke from the base of the cliff and trickled along its winding channel for a short distance to empty into a natural, circular opening in the surface of the ground. From deep in the bottom of this natural well the water falling from the rim could be heard splashing upon the surface of the water far below. It was dark down there—dark and mysterious—but the bearded ruffians gave no heed either to the beauty or the mystery of the spot.

One huge, fierce-visaged fellow, his countenance disfigured by an ugly scar, confronted a slim girl, who sat upon the turf, her back against a tree, her face in her arms.

"You thought me dead, eh?" he exclaimed. "You thought Bohar the Brutal dead? Well, he is not dead. Our boat weathered the storm and passing close to Amiocap we saw the wreck of the Cid's ship lying upon the sand. Knowing that you and the prisoners had been left aboard when we quit the ship, I guessed that perhaps you might be somewhere upon Amiocap; nor was I wrong, Stellara—Bohar the Brutal is seldom wrong.

"We hid close to a village which they call Lar and at the first opportunity we captured one of the villagers—a woman—and from her we learned that you had indeed come ashore, but that you were then in the village of your father, and we made the woman guide us there. The rest you know; now be cheerful, for at last you are to mate with Bohar and return to Korsar."

"Rather than that I shall die," cried the girl.

"But how?" laughed Bohar. "You have no weapons. Perhaps, however, you will choke yourself to death!"—and he laughed uproariously at his own joke.

"There is a way," cried the girl, and before he could guess what she intended, or stay her, she dodged quickly around him and ran toward the natural well that lay a few hundred feet away.

"Quick!" shouted Bohar. "Stop her!" And instantly the entire twenty sprang in pursuit. But Stellara was swift and there was likelihood that they would not overtake her in the short distance that lay between her and the edge of the abyss.

Fortune, however, was with Bohar that day, for almost at her goal Stellara's foot caught in a tangle of grasses and she stumbled forward upon her face. Before she could recover her feet the nearest Korsarian had seized her; then Bohar ran to her side and, taking her from the grasp of the other Korsarian, shook her violently.

"You she-tarag!" he cried. "For this I shall fix you so that never again will you run away! When we reach the sea, I shall cut off one of your feet and then I shall know that you will not run away from me again!" And again he shook her.

Breaking suddenly and unexpectedly from the dense jungle into the opening of the glade, a warrior came upon the scene being enacted at the edge of the well. At the moment he thought that Stellara was being killed, and he went mad with rage; nor was his rage any the less when he recognized Bohar as the author of the assault.

With an angry shout he leaped forward, his heavy spear ready in his hand. What mattered it that twenty men with firearms opposed him? He saw only Stellara in the cruel grip of the bestial Bohar.

At the sound of his voice the Korsarians looked up and instantly Bohar recognized the Sarian.

"Look, Stellara," he said, with a sneer. "Your lover has come. It is well, for with no lover and only one foot you will have no reason at all for running away."

A DOZEN arquebuses had already been raised in readiness and the men stood looking toward Bohar.

Tanar had reached the opposite edge of the well, only a few yards distant, when Bohar nodded and there was a roar of musketry and a flash of flame accompanied by so dense a pall of black smoke that for an

instant the figure of the Sarian was entirely obliterated from view.

Stellara, wide-eyed and trembling with pain and horror, tried to penetrate the smoke cloud with her frightened eyes. Quickly it lifted, revealing no sign of Tanar.

"Well done," cried Bohar to his men. "Either you blew him all to pieces, or his body fell into the hole." Going to the edge of the opening he looked down, but it was very dark there and he saw nothing. "Wherever he is, at least he is dead," said Bohar. "I should like to have crushed his life out with my own hands, but at least he is dead by my command and the blow that he struck me is wiped out, as Bohar wipes out the blows of all his enemies."

As the Korsarians resumed their march toward the ocean, Stellara walked among them with bent head and moist, unseeing eyes. Often she stumbled, but each time she was jerked roughly to her feet and shaken, at the same time being admonished in hoarse tones to watch her footing.

By the time they reached the seashore Stellara was sick with a high fever and she lay in the camp of the Korsars for what may have been a day or a month, too sick to move, while Bohar and his men felled timbers, hewed planks and constructed a boat to carry them to the distant shores of Korsar.

RUSHING forward to rescue Stellara from the clutches of Bohar, Tanar's mind and eyes had been fixed on nothing but the figure of the girl. He had not seen the opening in the ground and at the instant that the Korsarians fired their arquebuses he had stepped unwittingly into the opening and plunged to the water far below.

The fall had not hurt him. It had not even stunned him and when he came to the surface he saw before him a quiet stream moving gently through an opening in the limestone wall about him. Beyond the opening was a luminous cavern and into this Tanar swam, clambering to its rocky floor the moment that he had found a low place in the bank of the stream. Looking about him he found himself in a large cavern, the walls of which shone luminously, so considerable was their content of phosphorus.

There was a great deal of rubbish on the floor of the cave—the bones of animals and men, broken weapons, bits of

hide. It might have been the dumping-ground of some gruesome charnel-house.

THE Sarian returned to the opening through which the stream had borne him into the grotto, but a careful investigation revealed no avenue of escape in this direction, although he re-entered the stream and swam into the bottom of the well where he found the walls worn so smooth by the long-continued action of falling water that they gave no slightest indication of hand- or foot-hold.

Then slowly he made a circuit of the outer walls of the grotto, but only where the stream passed out at its far end was there any opening—a rough archway that rose some six feet above the surface of the underground stream.

Along one side was a narrow ledge and looking through the opening he saw a dim corridor leading away into the distance and obscurity.

There being no other way in which to search for freedom Tanar passed along the narrow ledge beneath the archway to find himself in a tunnel that followed the windings of the stream.

Only here and there small patches of the rock that formed the walls and ceiling of the corridor threw out a luminosity that barely relieved the inky darkness of the place; yet it did so relieve it that at least one might be sure of his footing, though at points where the corridor widened its walls were often lost in darkness.

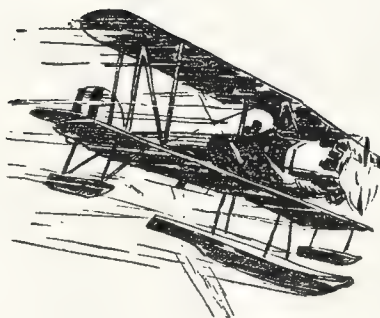
FOR what distance he followed the tunnel

Tanar did not know, but presently he came to a low and narrow opening through which he could pass only upon his hands and knees. Beyond there seemed to be a much lighter chamber and as Tanar came into this, still upon all fours, a heavy body dropped upon his back from above and then another at each side of him and he felt cold, clammy claws seizing his arms and legs, and arms encircled his neck—arms that felt against his flesh like the arms of a corpse.

He struggled, but they were too many for him; in a moment he was disarmed and his ankles and wrists securely bound with tough thongs of rawhide. Then he was rolled over on his side and lay looking up into the horrid faces of Coripis, the Buried People of Amicap.

Even more exciting are the subsequent events in this history of Tarzan's companion hero Tanar—in our next, the May, issue.

The Episode of the Juxacanna

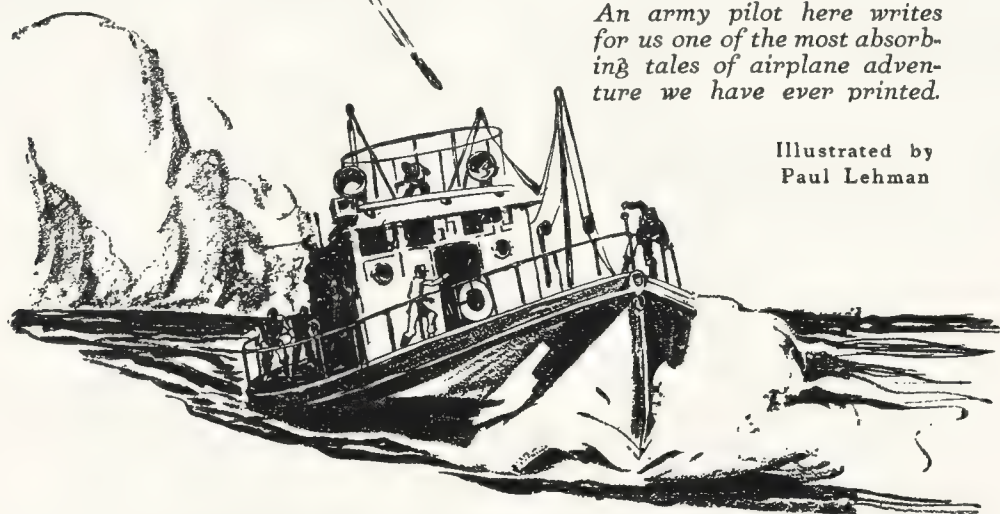


FOR days the air patrol had had nothing in particular to occupy its time. Nick Wentworth, chief pilot of the patrol, stationed at San Antonio, had run down an occasional lead for prohibition headquarters, located a few small stills that were hidden craftily in the mesquite of the hills to the northwest, and had carried on a sporadic surveillance over certain pilots

By LELAND S.
JAMIESON

An army pilot here writes for us one of the most absorbing tales of airplane adventure we have ever printed.

Illustrated by
Paul Lehman



Nick jerked his bomb-release as the bow of the Juxacanna slid underneath his wing.

near the Border who were suspected of bringing aliens in from Mexico.

During the second week of the patrol's idleness, to occupy the pilots' time, Wentworth ordered an overhaul of all the planes except his own, it having been repaired a short time previously. Accordingly, when the wire came, Nick's ship was the only one available for the emergency. The wire was from Washington:

ANN GORMAN AND WILLIAM LAMONT
REPORTERS FOR AMERICAN NEWS-
PAPER KIDNAPED YESTERDAY IN NAS-
SAU BY CAPTAIN FARLEY OR MEMBER OF

CREW OF RUM BOAT JUXACANNA STOP
FARLEY REPORTED PUTTING INTO GULF
WATERS TO DISPOSE OF LARGE QUAN-
TITY OF LIQUOR IN VICINITY OF HIGH
ISLAND AND BELIEVE HE WILL THEN
CONTINUE TO MEXICAN COAST STOP
COAST GUARD NOTIFIED AND REQUEST
YOU SEND PILOTS TO MAKE AIR PATROL
OF COAST IN VICINITY OF HIGH ISLAND
IN COOPERATION WITH CAPTAIN FER-
NARD STOP YOU ARE TO LOCATE JUXA-
CANNA AND AID IN EVERY WAY HER
CAPTURE END

STILES

Wentworth whistled softly. He read the telegram twice and then yelled into the next room: "Whittaker!" Whittaker was his chief clerk. A moment later the latter appeared in the doorway.

"Remember Farley and the *Juxacanna*?" Wentworth asked, and Whittaker nodded. "He's up to his old tricks. Shanghaied a man and woman in Nassau yesterday and is headed for the Gulf. Get my ship on the line and run 'er up—I'm going down to the coast on a patrol. Send Scott in here!"

When Whittaker had gone Wentworth paced the room in agitation. He pondered the elements of the case, the motive behind Farley's action, the best procedure to follow in attempting a capture of the *Juxacanna*. Presently Scott dashed in.

"Scotty," Nick began, "I'm going to Galveston to help locate the *Juxacanna*—Farley's shanghaied a couple of reporters—one of 'em a woman! Get all the ships fixed up as soon as you can and come down to Galveston—I'll probably need you. You're in command here while I'm gone, and I want some action! This may not mean much, but it may mean more than you or I care to imagine. Remember, Farley's back of this, and you know Farley!"

"Farley!" Scott spoke in angry incredulity. "Not *that* Farley?"

Nick nodded. "There's only one Farley who'd pull a deal like this."

"That damn' mulatto? That's twice! God, yes, we'll hurry!—a *girl* this time! Lord, Nick, don't let him get away!"

NICK heard the staccato chatter of his motor as mechanics warmed it on the blocks. He gave Scott some last instructions and, loaded with his parachute and other accouterments, ran to the flying line. His big body and long legs seemed to move slowly, yet his progress over the ground was astonishingly swift. He stowed his handbag and other paraphernalia in the baggage compartment just forward of his cockpit, and hauled himself into the seat, pulling on his parachute as he went. Quickly he tested his motor, tried his ignition switches, and waved away the chocks in front of the plane's wheels. Wheeling the ship deftly, he swung into the wind and took off.

Wentworth's Vought was a single-seated affair, a converted two-passenger plane in which the passenger's cockpit had been transformed to hold an additional supply of gasoline, which gave the ship enough fuel for ten hours in the air. Painted a

light blue, at a high altitude its color faded into the azure of the sky; at sixteen thousand feet the roar of the motor could not be heard from the ground, and Nick could cruise over the area where a rum-runner might be expected, with the knowledge that he could not be seen or heard from the boat below.

In the air, flying a compass course to Galveston, Nick revved his motor up to a fast cruising speed. He settled his huge bulk comfortably in the cockpit and tried to sort out the various angles of the case.

Farley was a mulatto who had, some time after the war, obtained at an incredibly low price through an unscrupulous agent who knew what was being planned, an unused sub-chaser, a hundred-and-ten-foot boat that had been built during the war on contract and later abandoned to make a berth for barnacles on the mud at Beaumont. Powered by twin screws propelled by gasoline motors, the sub-chaser, in a pinch, could do all of thirty knots; and Farley, foreseeing the tremendous profit in running rum—and other contraband—planned to make use of that much speed when necessary.

Where Farley obtained the funds for this purchase, and for the subsequent expenses that were entailed in the reconstruction of the boat, was not known; but it was assumed that he had made it through questionable political practices in a large Southern city where the colored vote was considered an essential for the election of candidates. But be that as it may, the mulatto bought and paid cash for the craft, and immediately spent some twenty thousand dollars in fitting her up for his own uses. Within one year after that time he became known along the Florida and Gulf Coasts as a fearless and ruthless man.

THEREAFTER, for five years, Farley had operated wherever he chose without being apprehended. In fact, only once, when he was laden with liquor, did a coast guard cutter as much as delay him in his work; and upon that occasion, when overhauled and boarded by two officers from the cutter, he broke free and escaped, using the *Juxacanna's* thirty knots to take him out of sight of the pursuing cutter within the short space of an hour. Farley made the cutter's officers his prisoners, and after treating them badly over a period of two weeks put them ashore in irons at Los Portales and charged them with mutiny!

Withal, Farley was clever in his dealings—he had to be to evade enforcement of officers as he did. He was cursed with a perverted mind, coldly calculating, destitute of mercy in his relations with fellow beings. He was known to have shot down at least five men, in cold blood, at various times in his career, although nothing in the way of substantiating evidence could be found to verify that fact in any court. Somewhere on the eastern coast of Mexico he had a cove or a bayou where he ran when a force too large for him to handle was on his trail; and when he was once safe within foreign territory, his whereabouts unknown even to Mexican authorities, he waited until his pursuers were recalled for other business; then he loaded the *Juxacanna* with whatever freight was handy and sailed as a legitimate freighter back to the Bahamas. His boat was under British registry, and when thus laden with freight and sighted by a coast guard cutter, he often invited a boarding party to inspect his ship, while he stood by and sneered openly.

Nick could understand the workings of Farley's mind in shanghaiing these reporters. He knew, from reports that had reached his office, that Farley had been almost blocked in by four cutters working together only two weeks before; he had been run unmercifully by a new cutter—the *Apache*, whose speed was almost equal to the *Juxacanna's*—last week, and had been chased into his lair on the Mexican coast. How he had escaped so quickly Nick did not know; but he did know that with Miss Gorman and Lamont as hostages, Farley could and would use their safety as threats against the coast guard—and whatever threats he made would be carried out with efficiency and dispatch.

He wondered what kind of girl Ann Gorman must be to go aboard the *Juxacanna* for a story for her paper. She knew, of course, that Farley was a runner, else she would not have sought an interview—the story would have been worthless.

BY eleven o'clock that morning Wentworth had landed at the flying field at Galveston. He went at once to Captain Fernard's office, reported, and showed the coast guard officer the telegram from Stiles. Fernard had received the word that morning, and since its coming a radiogram had come in from a freighter in the Gulf. He handed it to Nick.

TO ALL COAST GUARD CUTTERS: ANN GORMAN AND WILLIAM LAMONT BEING HELD UNTIL AFTER UNLOADING LIQUOR FROM MY SHIP STOP THEY WILL NOT BE HARMED IF THIS BOAT IS ALLOWED TO CARRY ON ITS BUSINESS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE STOP NO REVENUE OR COAST GUARD CUTTERS MUST COME WITHIN SIGHTING DISTANCE OR LAMONT WILL BE KILLED STOP HAVE A DIFFERENT WAY OF DISPOSING OF YOUNG WOMAN.

FARLEY CAPTAIN

Nick read the radiogram and tossed it on Fernard's desk.

"About what I thought!" he said dourly. "What's the first move? We've got to work fast and we've got to be careful about it—he'll do just what he says."

"We wont let him—we'll show that damn' nigger that he can't pull a stunt like this and get away with it! We'll put the *Apache* on his trail and run him down!"

Nick reflected. Fernard was new on the job in the Gulf District. He had heard a good deal about Farley, but the pilot wondered if he realized just how relentless the mulatto really was when pressed.

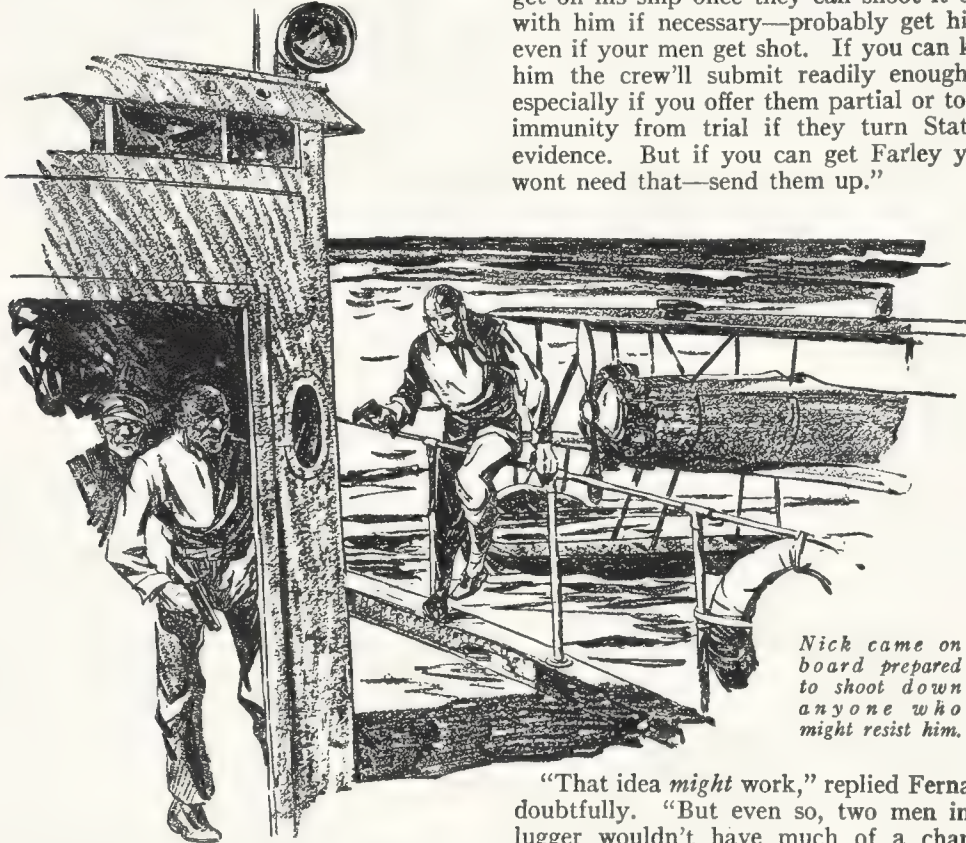
"You can't send a cutter after him," he protested, "unless you want a dead reporter on the bottom of the Gulf. He wont hesitate about killing a fool reporter—not for an instant. As soon as the *Apache* comes in sight Lamont'll be thrown over the side—full of bullets! Captain, we've got to figure out some other way."

Fernard was stubborn. He was a man who believed in force—plenty of it. The present situation could, it seemed to him, be handled successfully only by sending a fleet of his fastest cutters after Farley.

"Other way?" Fernard asked, after a moment. "But my boy, what other way is there at our disposal? The only way to arrest a ship at sea is from another ship. We'll get force! We'll get every cutter in Gulf waters. We'll patrol the air above and locate him. Then we'll surround the devil. If we corner him and he sees that escape is hopeless, he'll surrender—and he'll be afraid to kill Lamont!"

"No, sir, Captain," Nick insisted. "He'll kill Lamont just to show us that he isn't afraid! He must be crazy, but he's built that way. He brags that he always keeps his word—he says that these people wont be harmed as long as we keep away, but let a cutter get within sight of him and—Captain Fernard, think of that girl out

there! He won't touch her as long as we stay away, but let a cutter go after him!—What we've got to do is to capture him by surprise, so he won't have a chance to kill Lamont. . . . Where was the *Juxacanna* when this radiogram was sent?"



Nick came on board prepared to shoot down anyone who might resist him.

"We can't be sure about that, Wentworth. Evidently she was somewhere near the Straits of Florida, because only one boat picked it up—the *Chauncy*—and relayed it in to us. The *Chauncy* was the only boat in that vicinity at the time—two hundred miles west of the tip of Florida. We radioed back, but the *Chauncy's* skipper said he had seen nothing of Farley's boat—just picked up the message. Farley apparently has only a small wireless, and not much range, because several other freighters were within three hundred miles of the *Chauncy* when she got the message, and none of them picked it up."

WENTWORTH computed some data with a pencil, tossed the pencil to one side and sat drumming his finger-tips on the desk top.

"If he's near Florida now he'll probably be off shore near High Island tomorrow night in time to unload before daylight. Why don't you get a lugger and go out after him—disguise a couple of men as runners and have them go aboard? If they get on his ship once they can shoot it out with him if necessary—probably get him, even if your men get shot. If you can kill him the crew'll submit readily enough—especially if you offer them partial or total immunity from trial if they turn State's evidence. But if you can get Farley you won't need that—send them up."

"That idea *might* work," replied Fernard doubtfully. "But even so, two men in a lugger wouldn't have much of a chance against that crew. And I'm inclined to think that Farley, having worked this coast as long as he has, knows the runners and the luggers that work out of the bayous around High Island. He'd spot our men before they ever got ready to take liquor off—they wouldn't have a chance; besides, you know well enough that a runner in a lugger never goes on the vessel unless he knows the captain and is invited. My men's attempt to board the *Juxacanna* would be a dead give-away. I wouldn't send my men on a job like that anyhow!" Fernard paused, then continued: "No, what we need is force, Wentworth—plenty of force! What other ideas have you?"

"Nothing definite. My main idea is not to use cutters—I know Farley'd do just what he says he will. You can't get all your cutters in here for two or three days; I'm go-

ing to patrol the coast, try to find him at sea. I'm not certain what I'll do if I do find him, but I'll do something! I'll report back tomorrow or the next day. Anything special you want me to do?"

"Just locate him and send us word," Fernard replied. "While you're doing that I'll get some ships in here, and when you give us the word we'll go."

Nick, when he told Fernard that his plans were indefinite, was stalling. He had a well-formed plan, but he was afraid that the coast guard captain would order him to refrain from trying to put it into effect. He went back to his Vought piqued that Fernard was so dogmatic. He left word at the flying field to leave the landing lights in readiness to illuminate the field, should he return after dark.

IN the air again, with a ten-hour supply of gasoline, he swung out over the blue-green water of the Gulf and headed east, climbing leisurely. The sky was almost cloudless; here and there, however, a cumulus cloud—a mass of fluffy white, riding at twenty-five hundred feet—drifted in below him, its shadow appearing on the water like a dark splotch of grayish black. He climbed steadily until the Vought was flying easily at fourteen thousand feet. For miles, to the east and south, and west—behind him, he could see the smoothness of the water, white-caps breaking in ripples of foam, until the water and sky merged into a barely distinguishable horizon line.

Having gained his altitude, Nick swung gently to the southward until the land was fifty miles away, blotted out in the haze lying between. For four hours he cruised, at an airspeed of a hundred miles an hour. He saw several ships, at widely separated intervals, all squat steamers that wallowed in the water, so slow and tub-like that in their wake there was no foam—nothing but a wide, V-shaped backwash that extended two hundred yards behind, then faded almost imperceptibly into the surrounding water.

NICK did not expect to locate the *Juxacanna* on this flight, but he knew that in twenty-four hours Farley's boat, if pressed, could put eight hundred miles behind her. If Farley expected pursuit, undoubtedly he would put all the distance possible between himself and his pursuers. If he did not expect pursuit, he probably would cruise at sixteen or eighteen knots,

traveling about four hundred fifty miles during the first day. Therefore Nick reasoned that if he located the *Juxacanna* within four or five hours after leaving Galveston he would be defeated—he would have insufficient time to carry out his plans; however, if he did not find her he would know that she was cruising or was taking more of a southerly route to High Island, thus keeping out of traffic lanes.

Coming east Nick had lost nearly an hour's daylight, and now, as the sun sank into its slot in the sea behind him, he turned north toward shore. He had not seen the *Juxacanna*, and he was certain that Farley considered himself safe from pursuit from the rear. The question remained: Was the rum-runner following traffic lanes at a slow speed, or was he circling south?

As darkness approached, Nick had only a general idea of where he was, although he knew that he was well past Pilot Town and the mouth of the Mississippi River. He was somewhat worried about finding a place to land in the dark, and finally decided to risk going into the Naval flying field at Pensacola.

The dusk thickened into night, and for two hours more he bored into the darkness before he saw the dull line that marked the coast. There he turned eastward again, following the coast at a mile or two inland, hoping to pick up the lights of the Naval beacon. But the beacon was not lighted; Nick did not know he had reached the field until he saw the dull glow of floodlights on the water in front of the seaplane hangars. Nowhere was there a light by which he could land his plane upon the field. He circled low, hoping to attract attention, and presently he saw an automobile throw a searchlight upon the flying field. Another car added its light to the one already there; and later, still another. Nick brought his ship into the field in a slow glide and landed just beyond the row of cars.

That night, in conference with a rear admiral of the Navy and several officers of his staff, Nick explained his proposition. The admiral listened in silence until Nick had finished.

"You must realize, Wentworth, that I cannot openly give you any assistance in this matter," the admiral said finally. "You understand that the coast guard and the air patrol have their work to do, and the Navy, also. If we should go running around after every rum-runner on this coast that's all we would have time to do. If you get

orders from the Secretary of the Navy for me to go into this thing, then I'm with you; otherwise—"

"Yes," Nick interrupted, "but I'm only asking your help in getting several of a certain type of gas bomb, which I understand you have here. After I get them and the racks for them, I'll handle the rest of this business myself. I want pontoons for my ship, if you can spare them, because landing in the water with wheels means wrecking the plane, as you know."

"And you propose to fly out to sea two or three hundred miles in a single-motored plane, drop bombs on this rum vessel to put her crew out of action, then board the ship and bring her in single-handed?" The admiral was incredulous. "What about your airplane after you land out there?"

Nick laughed nervously. "I won't need it then, Admiral. I'll either be the boss of the ship or I'll be Farley's prisoner. There's no other way I can get those fool reporters off. If Farley ever sees me, or has a suspicion that I'm around, he'll bump Lamont off—right now! Then he'll turn and run for the Mexican coast and we'll *never* get him—foreign waters and a boat of British registry— It's the only chance I see of beating him. There's that fool girl to consider, you know; she complicates things."

"Well, you're the man who'll have to do the fighting," the admiral smiled, frank admiration in his tones. "If you have the guts to jump on a crew like that, I'll give you everything I can—secretly, of course."

AT the field early the following morning the Vought was fitted with pontoons and bomb-racks as speedily as a crew of six men could do the work. From the stores of the Naval depot the admiral obtained five twenty-five-pound tear-gas bombs, the gas in which had been carefully tested for potency. In all respects the bombs, when delivered, looked like ordinary military demolition projectiles; when dropped, they burst with a slight explosion, spraying gas over a wide area.

In the air again, this time at fifteen thousand feet, Nick turned south over the Gulf. He believed the *Juxacanna* could be found soon after noon about three hundred miles off the delta, and for five hours he roared through the air, scanning the water through binoculars. At the end of that time he computed his location to be three hundred and fifty miles south of Pilot Town. And still he had seen no vessel that

in the least resembled the trim, slender outlines of the *Juxacanna*.

He decided, then, that the rum-boat had perhaps made better time than he had calculated, and he swung westward. He knew that he must pick up a trace of the craft quickly or he would be forced to give up the search and return to land for gasoline. Besides, in three more hours the sun would go down and dusk would put an end to the search. Already it was time to turn back—if he wanted to get back.

He decided to stay, and if he ran out of gasoline before dark perhaps he could glide to a passing steamer and land in the water beside her. If his gas was exhausted after dark—well, he'd find Farley's boat before dark!

Again Nick found himself thinking about Ann Gorman—not pleasantly. His work with the air patrol had included several chases such as this one; but never before had a girl been involved. What a cock-eyed fool she must be! He thought, sourly: "But the little fool's down there—and here I am, three hundred miles from land in a single-motored airplane! And boy, look at all that water!"

THIRTY minutes passed, and still no sub-chaser appeared on the horizon. Nick was tempted to abandon the search. He could not get back to Pensacola with the gasoline that now remained, but he could strike north and land on the Mississippi by the glow of the lights of Pilot Town. He shook his head and doggedly continued the patrol. He realized abstractedly that he was very tired.

The boat he sought would have no betraying smoke; she was propelled by gasoline motors. He would see her first as a dark speck on the horizon, and as he overhauled her he would see the froth of her wake lying out behind. And she was so small that from fifteen thousand feet he might easily miss her altogether.

Fifteen minutes went by and still there was no sign of the boat. Nick turned and started toward shore, hoping to make the delta with the gasoline that still remained. He had come some two hundred miles toward shore when he saw ahead of him a dark fleck upon the water, a boat whose speed far exceeded the freighters he had been seeing all day.

Excitedly he examined her through his glasses, then turned slightly so as to intersect her path, to be directly overhead when

he caught up with her. As he approached he could see that she had no stacks, no sails; she was clean and trim and fast. And she was running twenty knots at least—perhaps more. Either she was a cutter or she was the *Juxacanna*; and Nick knew that she was Farley's boat because no cutter had been reported within four hundred miles of this point that morning.

But what surprised and grimly amused Nick more than anything was that she was cruising right in the traffic lanes that led from the Straits of Florida to Galveston! The effrontery of that mulatto! Nick had expected to find him near a traffic lane running at full speed, or miles south of the usual course of steamers' travel, cruising. His patrol of the day before had convinced him that Farley would follow the southern route; to see the vessel cruising easily, passing steamers whose skippers undoubtedly had heard about him by this time! At the speed the boat was making—though slow in comparison with the speed she was capable of—Farley would be unloading liquor into skulking luggers in rum-row by the light of the stars the following morning—unless Nick's plans were carried through.

The patrol pilot throttled his motor, eased back on the stick as the nose of the Vought got heavy, and banked into a gentle spiral. He closed his shutters—there could be no "jazzing" of his motor to clear it out once he got down within earshot. Floating down in easy, graceful spirals, keeping just behind the *Juxacanna* as she plowed through the sea, the Vought made hardly a sound.

Gradually the plane sank lower. It reached ten thousand feet, and after a seemingly endless time, five thousand. Nick wondered about his motor. If it got too cold in the long glide it might quit when it was necessary to "gun" it suddenly. But that was a risk he must take—he could not gun it now to warm it, or he would warn Farley of his presence.

AT a thousand feet, a quarter of a mile behind the *Juxacanna*, Nick rolled the plane out of its bank and dived gently toward the boat. His right hand clutched the control stick; his left gripped the bomb-release on its quadrant. The plane slipped nearer, silently. Nick tensed his muscles.

Then, without warning, the rum-boat heeled hard over and, slowing rapidly, turned to starboard. The move came as a complete surprise to Nick. He could see

four or five men scrambling along the deck aft of the wheelhouse. He banked his plane quickly and followed. He was almost over the boat now, and he timed his shots; Farley, with all the maneuvering ability of his sub-chaser, could not out-maneuver a fighting airplane!

Nick wanted to make the first bomb strike the stern of the craft, and to place each of the other five bombs along the center-line of the ship. He jerked his bomb release vigorously five times in quick succession as the bow of the *Juxacanna* slid underneath his lower wing and out of sight. He was not sure, even, that any of his shots had been effective.

As the Vought passed swiftly over the bow of the boat Nick heard the hard, metallic *chat-chat-chat-chat* of a machine-gun fifty feet below him! Half a dozen holes appeared in the fabric of the left wings, and at the same time something slapped viciously at the pilot's right boot. In his excitement Nick jammed his throttle on; the motor sputtered, coughed brokenly—stopped. He rolled the plane into a steep left bank, into the wind. He was down at sea!

Then the motor picked up again, ran evenly a moment. Frantically Nick worked his "wabble" pump. But again the motor stopped. It *pflughed* a few times, like an old sea-captain in anger, and starved into silence. In the slowing glide the propeller stopped turning.

Nick completed the turn into the wind and settled the plane easily into the water in a trough between two swells just as he picked the wing up from the bank. A close squeeze, that! If he had dragged a wing in the water and crashed—

The *Juxacanna*, slowing, brought around and headed toward where the Vought snuggled in the sea. She bore down upon the plane head-on; then, slowly, she heeled away and passed at fifty feet, her speed now not more than twelve knots. She continued in a wide circle, which at its farther point took her a quarter of a mile from where Nick was, then turned and headed slowly back again. It was evident to Nick that her motors had been cut off, that her helmsman was incapacitated through the effect of the gas.

He realized that the effects of the tear-gas would wear off in a short time—he would have to act quickly. But he was a poor swimmer, and even if he should succeed in negotiating the distance between the



Lamont lashed out a blow just as the gun roared. The captain seemed to have his feet knocked from under him, so violently did he fall.

airplane and the *Juxacanna* there was no way in which he could board her. He had planned to taxi the Vought to the side of the boat and climb on board from the nose of the plane. That still remained the only way. He worked his wobble pump again, and tried his starter. It would not respond. There was no way he could brace himself upon a pontoon and turn the propeller by hand—that starter *must* work!

HE scrambled out of his cockpit and started an inspection of his battery cables. He crawled out to a precarious perch upon the wing of the bobbing plane and removed a cowl and checked the wires to the starter-motor. A bullet had sheared the wire clean, and he worked frantically repairing it.

The cable spliced, the motor still refused to start. Nick leaped out of the cockpit again and inspected his gasoline lines. He found more bullet-holes, and just above a group of them he found the faulty line. A bullet had made a deep crease in the copper tube, had cut it half in two. He made his way cautiously back to his

tool compartment and brought out tape and cement. The line was dry of gasoline, and he had no difficulty patching it.

When that was finished the motor started easily. But Nick was afraid now. The *Juxacanna* wallowed stationary three hundred yards away, so far that even with his binoculars the pilot could not be sure that some members of the crew were not recovering from the effects of the gas. He examined his pistol grimly and taxied toward the rum vessel. He butted the nose of the Vought against the steel hull, having cut his switches as he was drifting in, and scrambled hurriedly on deck.

He came on board prepared to shoot down anyone who might resist him, for in abandoning his plane he had cut off all means of escape for himself. He meant to be the master of the *Juxacanna*, or die fighting.

For half a minute he stood by the rail surveying the deck. There was no one there. Up near the bow was the machine-gun that had shot him down, but no one was near at hand. He peered hard into the wheelhouse, looking for the helmsman; he,

too, was missing—there was no one at the wheel. And Nick, seeing no one anywhere about was reassured. He made his way to the companionway, to go below in search of Farley.

The fact that Nick saw no one should have warned him. But he had encountered no opposition where he had expected serious difficulties; he became over-confident, and congratulated himself upon the efficacy of his plan.

He was first warned of the proximity of an assailant when he heard a slight shuffling behind him as he passed a ventilator. He whirled, but too late. He had half turned, his pistol ready, when the butt of a gun crashed down upon his head. He crumpled and fell in a huddle on a hatchway cover.

Immediately a mulatto, wearing dungarees and a seaman's cap, stepped from his hiding-place in the wheelhouse and barked out orders to his crew. Nick was carried, unconscious, through the companionway and below.

WHEN he regained consciousness night had fallen and the only sounds that came to his ears were throbbing of the motors and the gurgle of water as it swept by underneath the porthole. He turned his head slightly and tried, in the dim light, to see about him.

Nick thought he was alone, but upon hearing a voice he tried to raise his head, despite the pain it caused, to see who shared the room with him. The voice was soft, a whisper; and there was a sardonic quality to the words.

"Farley's got another prisoner, I see."

Nick eyed his companion silently for a moment. He saw a young man, who looked more like a boy than a man, who had about him an air of inexperience. He was small, and he spoke with a Southern accent.

"Yes," Nick tried to grin. "I gummed the works. You're the other prisoner—you're Lamont?"

"I'm Lamont," the other replied gravely. He paused.

"I'm Lamont," he repeated woodenly, as though chanting a liturgy. "The guy who's goin' to be stood up on the deck tomorrow mornin' and shot—because you came out here and messed with Farley's crew! The nigger told me this afternoon—said he always did what he said he'd do. . . . He said he'd kill me if the coast guard bothered him—"

NICK had fired his bolt, was helpless, locked in a room awaiting the events to come. He had risked his life to save Lamont and this girl—he had been so sure that the *Juxacanna* was his, that he would have it in port directly, with the mulatto and his crew as prisoners.

But where speed had been urgent before, when he started on the patrol of the Gulf waters seeking Farley, speed was now imperative. He had ten hours in which to wrest the *Juxacanna* from its crew! He felt an impulse to swear at Lamont, to condemn him and Ann Gorman for the fools they were for coming on board this boat; but he held his tongue. Stumbling slightly, he walked to the stateroom door and tried the knob. As he knew, even before attempting it, he could not hope to break the lock. He inspected the porthole; the room was as effective a prison as could be found.

"Where's Miss Gorman?" he asked.

"Next stateroom, I think," Lamont replied. "Oh, they take very good care of her!"

"Anybody stand guard outside these doors?"

"Not that I know of."

"Farley ever come down here? Ever come inside? Who guards the door when he does?"

"Been in here twice—the day they shanghaied us, and today. He came by himself and didn't carry a pistol in his hand, although I know he was armed."

Nick was silent. This boy had nerve. Most youngsters of his age would have been sniveling about tomorrow morning!

"How'd you ever get on this boat?"

"Chasin' a story. Fools, weren't we? But it would have made a peach of a story, let me tell you! And if I ever get out of this, I'll be made! But I don't expect I'll ever get to write it."

"No, you probably wont," Nick thought. But aloud he tried to bolster up the hope that he knew would never die in Lamont until Farley's bullets were on their way. It occurred to him that Lamont might not know the circumstances under which he, Nick, had tried to capture the *Juxacanna*.

"You see me come over? Hear those bombs hit the deck?"

"I heard the bombs—five of 'em. And then I heard that machine up there goin'. I knew right then what had happened, but I thought it was a cutter after us. I expected Farley to come down here and—and fix me up right afterward. A minute later

I got that gas in my eyes. I heard someone yellin' up above, and when I could see again I looked through the porthole and saw your plane out there. I saw you start her up and come alongside—in a minute they brought you down here." Lamont grinned faintly. "They must 'a' given you a belt over the head—you were out three hours! When Farley went back on deck they started again, and I couldn't hear what they said, but they got your plane and hoisted it up on deck—at least it sounded like that—"

"Got my plane on board?" Nick cried. "You sure of that?"

"Yes, I saw 'em run alongside and heard 'em liftin' it. Yes, I'm sure."

"What good'll that do 'em? Who's going to fly it?"

LAMONT raised his hand suddenly, and Nick paused. From the door there was a slight sound, a click, as though a key had been inserted in the keyhole. A moment later the two men heard the grating of the bolt as it was withdrawn.

The door of the stateroom was built to swing inward when opened. When thrown wide it swung back and hit the corner of the room, at the foot of the bunk on which Nick sat. He watched the door intently as the lock was unbolted.

"Hold his attention!" he whispered monitorily. "Stand there by the porthole!" Lamont moved silently to obey, and Nick darted to the corner in front of which the door would swing.

The door opened slowly at first, then was flung wide. Without pausing or looking around, Farley strode into the room.

Nick had no other weapon than his fists, and at a glance he saw in the mulatto's hand a pistol, its muzzle pointed toward Lamont. He knew that Farley would shoot him down if he were found behind the door. If he stepped into the doorway to strike Farley, he might be shot at from behind by some member of the crew. But that was another risk that he must take.

He shoved the door aside gently with a pressure of his foot, and struck. The blow caught Farley behind the ear, but high; and although the force of it would have knocked out an ordinary white man, it merely dazed Farley for a moment, sent him reeling across the room. He sprawled across the railing of a bunk, and slipped to the floor. But he was up again before Nick could make the leap across the room.

Cursing, Farley leveled the gun at Nick. "Should 'a' hit me harder!" he bellowed. "I'll croak you right now and save trouble later on." His finger tightened on the trigger. Nick, fascinated by that finger, stood as one entranced. If he moved, the shot would come the quicker.

Lamont lashed out a blow just before the gun roared, and the bullet struck against the stateroom wall. Nick was unprepared for the reporter's move, and astonished by the force of it. Lamont struck with the full force of a "haymaker," picked up from the floor, and the blow went home to the mulatto's temple. The captain seemed to have his feet knocked out from under him, so violently did his body fall.

"Forgot about me back here, or thought I was harmless," the youngster chuckled.

"The crew'll hear that shot; got to make this fast!" Nick barked.

Quickly they searched the mulatto. They found two more pistols, and a knife. Nick took two pistols and gave the knife and other pistol to Lamont.

"Don't be squeamish about using either one of these, kid!" he cried. "We've got to fight our way out of here!"

"Right!" Lamont replied. "I'm with you." The boyish air had left him.

The pilot paused at the doorway. "The only trouble is that I don't know my way about this boat in the dark. How many men in the crew?"

"Six. Hadn't we better tie this devil up some way?"—indicating Farley.

"Haven't time. He'll stay out for half an hour, the way you hit him! We'll have this boat by that time. Come on!"

But just then Farley moved, and groaned, tried to struggle to his feet. Nick saw Lamont's swift movement, heard the thud that followed.

"He'll stay out now!" the reporter cried. "Give me the key—we'll lock him in. Here, wait! Get his other keys—we'll get Miss Gorman."

THE two men, with Farley's keys, opened the door to the stateroom where Ann Gorman was imprisoned. Lamont explained the situation briefly. Nick handed her a gun, with an admonition to use it if necessary. He thought, when he saw her: "She looks like a girl who'd have more sense than come aboard a rum-boat!"

With Nick leading, Ann Gorman in the middle, and Lamont trailing, the three started up the companionway, expecting

momentarily to meet one or all members of the crew. Undoubtedly, the pilot decided, they had heard the pistol-shot. Then the thought occurred to him: "If the crew heard the shot, they'll think that Farley has killed Lamont, as he intended. They'll not be curious enough to come below and get mixed up in a murder; they'll stay above and wait for Farley." The crew, then, would not expect to see three prisoners emerge from the companionway armed and ready for conflict.

The trio made their way cautiously toward the wheelhouse, stepping out of the companionway and pausing in the darkness of the deck to look intently around. Nick knew enough about boats of the sub-chaser type to know that one or two men would be below in the engine-room, one at the wheel, and the remaining three or four somewhere on the deck or in the forecabin. His plan was to get control of the wheelhouse first, then subdue the crew on deck or in the forecabin. He could take care of the engineer later on, forcing him to attend the engines.

THE stars gleamed faintly through a night haze. In the west a new moon was sinking slowly into the sea, giving no light whatever. The three adventurers emerged from the companionway and stood there a few moments, allowing their eyes to become accustomed to the murky darkness. Then, slowly, they proceeded.

In the wheelhouse, over the ship's charts, there was a faint light; otherwise the room was in darkness. In this semi-gloom they could see the outline of a man standing at the wheel. Leaving Miss Gorman and Lamont as a rear guard of a sort, Nick made his way cautiously to the door of the wheelhouse, and, gun in hand, burst it open. The startled helmsman whirled, and Nick covered him with his pistol.

"Easy there!" Nick cautioned. "I won't shoot unless you start something. I'm Wentworth of the air patrol. I've got Farley down below. How far are we out of Galveston?"

The seaman studied Nick intently. Then for answer he raised his arm and pointed through the glass into the gloom ahead. Nick was misled by the other's lack of hostility, and shifted his eyes and tried to see what the man was pointing out. In the fraction of a second necessary for that the seaman swung.

Ann Gorman, standing in the darkness

of the companionway, her pistol leveled on the dark form within the wheelhouse, was watching for some such move as the helmsman made. As he bunched his muscles to strike, she squeezed the trigger. The gun spat viciously and a slug tore through the glass of the wheelhouse and into the seaman's shoulder. With a cry of pain he grabbed at the wound, forgetting Nick.

This shot had been above the deck, where its sound carried more clearly. In two minutes three other seamen stampeded out of the forecabin, dressed in their underclothing, crying questions.

Nick arrested them. With their leader locked up, the navigator of the boat shot, and themselves threatened by the muzzles of three very businesslike guns, these members of the crew surrendered readily.

They were searched, then taken down and locked in the room that had been Miss Gorman's prison on the voyage. The engineer alone was unmolested; he had heard no commotion and would operate the engines until time for his relief—the *Juxacanna* would be in Galveston by then.

But the problem of getting the boat into port was not yet finished. Nick had some smattering of knowledge of celestial navigation, but not enough to plot their position and course on the open Gulf. He made several attempts, finally coming to the conclusion that the boat was somewhere in the vicinity of the mouth of the Sabine River, how far off-shore he did not know. He took the wheel from Miss Gorman, who had had it while he and Lamont were taking the crew below, and headed in a general north-western direction, hoping daylight would reveal the coast and Galveston ahead of him.

LAMONT was in the forecabin, dressing the shoulder of the wounded man; Miss Gorman remained in the wheelhouse.

Nick tried to discover what had been her motive in boarding the *Juxacanna*.

"I just wanted an adventure," she told him.

"Well, you got it!" Nick snorted. Now that the tension of the struggle was over, he felt a tendency to preach. "You won't be so lucky next time. You're darn' fortunate, if you only knew it! Adventure! What you need is a spanking!"

The girl laughed quietly. She sobered, then began to laugh again. She looked at Nick quizzically, a glint in her dark eyes.

"We-ell," she said mischievously, "shall I call Mr. Lamont—to take the wheel?"

The bitter feud between the Cossacks and the cowboys of the Golden Rule Wild West Show is here faithfully chronicled.



Cossack and Cowboy

By BUD LA MAR

It was too much for Meussia. He turned loose all holts and plowed a wide furrow in the sawdust.

WHEN the Golden Rule Wild West Show started out from winter quarters, the owners took great pride in pointin' out eight genuine, fearless, hard-ridin', hell-bendin' Cossacks. Two weeks later, while playin' in a little Texas town, one of the genuine, fearless, hard-ridin', hell-bendin' Roossians met in mortal combat with a plain old spur-jingler who didn't care one hoot in hell for whiskers, Santa Claus outfits or disembowelin' instruments. While the frothin'-at-the-mouth Cossack was a-tryin' to bring forth one of his swords, the Texas boy pulled a long, faded-lookin' six-shooter from his boot-top, oiled it up good, borrowed a couple of cartridges from somebody, squinted one eye along the barrel and plugged Mr. Cossack somewhere between the eyebrows. Had he aimed his gun one single inch higher, he would of missed him complete.

This unlooked-for development made it necessary for the show to struggle along with only seven Cossacks, and what cowboys hadn't laughed themselves to death at the quaint and humorous incident.

The last I seen of them seven remainin'

Cossacks, they was stacked in a ragged heap, wishin' they had never left their home country and firesides to make a fortune in the Wild West business, where their ideas of horsemanship wasn't at all appreciated.

This historical Cossack massacre was caused by several different conflictin' happenin's. But the foremost reason was the deep and undyin' passion which all Cossacks have for cash money. I have seen the nickel-clutchers trudgin' miles through the rain, between the cars and the lot, in order to save car-fare. It is against their lofty principles to ride on a street-car, or for that matter, to do anything which includes the squanderin' of hoarded pennies.

IT was Cherokee Smith, my bronc'-ridin' partner, who first got it in his head to separate our bewhiskered playmates from some of their rusty bucks. The suggestion was met with favor by all of us hard-workin' cowboys, but we realized that we stood a very slim chance of accomplishin' such a difficult feat, unless we used a great deal of diplomacy and secret plannin' beforehand.

Several high-handed schemes were dis-

carded before we finally hit on a plan which was a lalapalooza of an idea. We thought it up one night, in the dressin'-tent, while changin' clothes for the grand entry.

Manuel Valiz, the Mexican trick roper, was the daddy of the winnin' project. Manuel was the proud owner of an old fightin' rooster whose feathers had all been wore off on one side from bein' carried horseback between deadly combats with other ambitious chickens. That bird was a ring-tailed son of a gun. Whensoever we happened to hit a community where the noble sport of pullet-fightin' was practiced, we always dusted off old Pedro and matched him with the local champ. The result of them entertainin' meets were financial successes for us and we regarded Pedro with deep love and admiration.

"You *hombres* always talk, talk, talk," said Manuel. "Make the noise and never say nothing. I keep still and think. Now I know!"

"The hell you do!" said Cherokee.

"Yesss," continued Manuel, an oily smile on his face. "You fix it up the big fight, Pedro and Teeko. We win much money. Yesss? No?"

That idea had never occurred to us. Teeko was a big eagle which the Cossacks had brought from Roossia. He was so tame as to be in everybody's way. He would stand on one foot for hours at a time, lookin' dignified and sad. Long ago he must of been white, but now what feathers remained attached to him were dirty gray of color and droopin'. He was the most sorrowful-lookin' bird I ever seen. It wasn't likely that the Cossacks would risk any money to see their gloomy pet bein' tore to pieces by our ferocious and bloodthirsty Pedro.

"It's a sure thing, all right," said Cherokee. "But we'll never convince them hairy apes that they should pay to see it. They're too danged careful."

IT was worth tryin' anyhow, and the next morning Cherokee and me trooped by the Cossacks' tent, lookin' innocent and careless-like, and entered into conversation with the one we called Victor. Victor could speak some English and reminded you of a human bein'. They was playin' casino, as usual, grittin' their teeth and pullin' their hair by the handful every time they lost a penny. Teeko stood on a box near by, impersonatin' a reformer which had just gone through a hailstorm.

Cherokee patted the bird on the back, lovin'-like, and old Teeko looked like he was hurt and insulted but could think of nothing to do about it.

"Nice bird you got there," said Cherokee. "I betcha he's awful strong, too."

"Strong?" said Victor, glarin' at us. "Teeko kill big sheep, big goat, big dog. Just like that!" He made a motion like he was tearin' a shêet of paper in two.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Cherokee, lookin' impressed. "Well, what do you know about that!"

"Can you beat it!" I put in, joinin' into the spirit of astonishment. "Who'd of thunk it of him! And him such a nice old bird too!"

"A big sheep!" continued Cherokee. "Think of that! And a big goat, and a big dog! Just like that! And a jack mule too, who knows? Or a big rooster, maybe, huh?"

"Sure!" said Victor.

CHEROKEE shut one eye and looked doubtful.

"Well, now," he said, like he was considerin' something, "I wouldn't be so sure about that!"

"You think I lie?" said Victor, feelin' around while tryin' to make up his mind which sword to use. That's the trouble with Cossacks, right away they want to pull a knife on you and see what makes you tick. They're awful quick-tempered that-a-way.

Of course we didn't fear the big jabberin' monkeys, but we wasn't there to fight.

"Oh, no, no, no!" put in Cherokee right quick. "I just happened to think of one rooster which your cock-eyed eagle couldn't 'just like that' so easy. Old Pedro, by golly!"

Victor's flowin' mustache curled up disdainful-like.

"Pooh!" he said. "You make fun!"

Then Cherokee pulled the master-stroke. He reached in his pocket and hauled out a very handsome roll of money and went to countin' it. Outside of Victor, the Cossacks had no idea what it was all about, but when that roll made its appearance, they right away quit playin' cards, and their little eyes gleamed like fish-scales in a skillet.

"I'm bettin' this two hundred and forty dollars that Pedro can make your bird look like a Thanksgivin' turkey ready for the oven!" said Cherokee.

VICTOR explained the situation to his friends and for the next five minutes the air was full of grunts, jabbers, wavin' arms and bristlin' whiskers.

We just stood pat, waitin' for the commotion to quiet down. Finally they got everything fixed up and fell back exhausted, leavin' Victor to announce the decision.

"We bet with you," he said, "two hundred and forty dollars. You got more, maybe?"

As bad as we hated to say so, we didn't have any more. That roll represented all the money six cowboys had been able to throw together with high hopes of collectin' double.

The fight was to take place immediately, and we went to inform the rest of the boys of our luck in conductin' the negotiations successful.

A few minutes later a group of grinnin' cowboys made their way to the appointed battlefield, led by Manuel Valiz, carryin' Pedro under his arm. Teeko and his supporters, dressed in full uniform and armed to the teeth, already occupied the place. Bein' heeled ourselves, we failed to be impressed by the display of long and short cutlery.

Rough-necks, performers and concession men flocked from all corners of the lot to witness the thrillin' incident. Old man Jake Trigger, the boss, was made stakeholder. It was to be a catch-as-catch-can contest on account nobody could think up any fittin' set of rules to apply to the occasion.

Teeko stood in the middle of the ring, lost in deep meditations and sad memories and not at all lookin' like a bird about to be engaged in a fight to the death. Propped up on one leg, he gazed sorrowful-like around the expectant faces, gave a mournful squawk and settled down again, as if to spend the rest of his life a-grievin' the day he was born.

MANUEL had laced a pair of long steel spurs on Pedro's legs, and the blood-thirsty little devil was actually strugglin' to be turned loose. All our money, as well as our confidence, rested on Pedro. We knew the outcome beforehand, and only wondered how long it would take Pedro to whip the bigger bird.

"Are you ready?" asked Manuel.

"Yes!" answered Victor. "Go!"

Manuel placed Pedro on the ground and stood back to watch.

The game little rooster shook himself and danced up and down while sizin' up his enemy. As far back as he could remember, he had never before faced such an overgrown, dumb-lookin' bird. His neck stretched away out in front of him, and liftin' both feet high, he circled the eagle at a fast run, keepin' at a safe distance from danger.

Teeko wasn't interested in such vulgar goin's-on. The locoed doin's of an insignificant rooster were too far beneath his dignity to be noticed. But Pedro wasn't to be abashed by a display of mistaken importance. He considered Teeko from all angles and decided on a sudden attack from the rear, just to kinda feel out what he was up against. On his second circle and from a point of vantage, he abandoned the circlin' process and launched himself on Teeko's back with all the fury of a wildcat anointed with turpentine. Dirty gray feathers flew up in a cloud under the furious digs of the steel spurs.

"Give it to him, Pedro!" yelled the cowboys, me included. "Claw him up—the big yaller buzzard!"

The Cossacks said nothing; they just looked. Under the circumstances there was nothing they could say.

Pedro, taken aback by this unlooked-for lack of opposition, flew aside to think it over. He hugged the ground, neck stretched before him, and his little sawed-off wings opened wide, regardin' his handiwork.

TEEKO blinked both eyes, reared back proud-like and give the little rooster a piercin' glance, full of annoyance and disapproval. He had been insulted sure enough! First thing you know, he was liable to get sore. He just wasn't goin' to allow such familiarity, no sir, none whatever. Regardless of which, he again became a target for Pedro's spurs and lost another flock of feathers and his peace of mind.

This had gone far enough. Teeko looked very reproachful and sad, and then he done something. It was a very simple gesture and not at all threatenin'. He simply reached out with a big open claw, grasped the strugglin' rooster around the neck and pulled him over. Pedro gave a startled squawk. It was a loud squawk, but very short. Teeko placed his other claw around Pedro's head, delicately but firmly. He made one little twist and threw something away from him.

We observed with shudderin' horror that

the object which had landed at our feet was nothing else than our Pedro's neatly twisted-off head.

The promised fight had turned out to be a simple murder!

The silence was oppressive. All present regarded Teeko with astonishment mixed with respect and admiration. That bird was nobody's rooster's sparrin'-partner!

Pedro's headless body beat about helpless-like and finally lay still. Teeko ruffled the remains of his feathers, gave a long hopeless sigh and returned to his philosophical wonderin's.

The silence was suddenly broken by Manuel's wails and laments and the Cossacks' yelps of joy. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw old man Trigger handin' something to Victor, and I retired from the field, tears streamin' from my eyes. . . .

What had started as a joke was now a question of honor. Unless we obtained a spectacular revenge very shortly, we would be laughed off the Golden Rule. Every man, woman and child connected with the outfit went into conniption fits whenever one of us showed his face on the lot. Which, you will have to admit, was a very distasteful state of affairs.

That same night, we left the show soon after the evening performance and repaired to a welcomin' saloon in the town. After surroundin' a few badly needed drinks, we begun to consider ways and means of regainin' our lost self-respect—also our two hundred and forty dollars.

"A Cossack," said Jimmy Hunter, "is nothing but a cross between a hydrophoby skunk and a hide-buyer. Why, the big gorillas actually think they can ride a horse. They believe it! The damn' horse-killin' Roossians! I'd like to see one astraddle of old Blue Goose!"

ALL of us would of liked to seen the same thing. But we figured we had as much chance of inveiglin' a Cossack onto a buckin' horse as we had of separatin' one from his whiskers, or his red coat, or one of his swords. It was even rumored that they hid a bowie knife in their beards. We had no way of provin' they didn't. There was room enough in them whiskers to conceal a yearlin' colt.

"Horse riders!" snorted Lou Hanson. "All I ever seen 'em do is ride fast and holler!"

"Still—" put in Cherokee, a light of hope in his eyes. "We might git 'em to put some

money on the ridin' of Blue Goose, if we worked it right. They think we're easy now."

Manuel was the only one not interested in the proceedin's. He was a-mournin' the death of Pedro. He downed many drinks, smoked one cigarette after another and sharpened a long shiny knife on his boot-top. He would be of no help to us, unless we asked him to cut a few Cossack throats. He might do that on his own, anyway!

THEM Cossacks thought a lot of their horsemanship. Yet they were crude as hell and born horse-killers. All that put over the few simple tricks they performed was the outlandish uniforms, the yellin' and the flashin' of swords. Their kyacks were back-eaters and inferior to a pack-saddle. A hundred straps, cinches and ragged leathers hung from the miserable outfits, givin' them the appearance of tangled-up sets of harness. If they were horsemen, we were sheepherders and proud of it.

One jump of old Blue Goose, we felt sure, would separate any Cossack from his trappin's, and the second jump would send him along to join them. But we had a suspicion that they didn't crave any bronc'-ridin'. There was four peelers on the Golden Rule, of which I was one, and none of us ever rode Blue Goose more than once out of three times. That horse was poison. If we could ever get a Cossack on the old outlaw, we would be well repaid for our embarrassment, financial and otherwise.

Next day was movin' day, and as we loaded the Wild West horses onto the cars we devised a way whereby we might convince a Cossack that he was an unsuspected bloomin' bronc'-rider.

After we had been settled on the new lot, where we were to play a week stand, a strange development occurred at the dinner table, within sight and hearin' of every member of the show, includin' the Cossacks. There arose a very hot argument between the two trick riders and the four bronc'-riders. Dishes were smashed, tables overturned; hot words and threatenin' gestures passed back and forth, the surprisin' part about it bein' that no blows were exchanged and no actual warfare took place.

The argument had to do with ridin' qualities and a horse named Blue Goose. The bronc'-riders were accused of ridin' with all the grace of fat Injun squaws. They had learned their trade by correspondence. They couldn't really ride in a box car with



The locoed doin's of an insignificant rooster were too far beneath Teeko's dignity to be noticed.

both doors shut. Blue Goose was nothing but a big plow-horse, too slow and clumsy to get up a sweat in the summer-time. He couldn't buck off a wet saddle blanket, let alone a ridin' man. We were hotel lobby riders and a bunch of so-and-so jellybeans.

Followin' which, the trick riders packed their trunks and moved in with a family of acrobats. They would have nothin' more to do with us.

Sometime later, from points of vantage, we observed Slim Harper, one of the trick riders, enter the Cossacks' dressin'-tent. The jabberin' and card-playin' thereafter came to a stop, to be replaced by a lot of mysterious whisperin'. The same night the flap of our tent opened and disclosed the surprisin' presence of two Cossacks, come to pay us a friendly and unexpected call.

ONE of our visitors was Victor and the other a big burly devil named Meussia. Meussia was a perfect ringer to the "missin' link." His head run to a peak, like a pear, and he had no more forehead than a jackrabbit. He was the Ataman, the leader of the tribe, grand lobster, head-man and top hand sword-waver.

Victor opened negotiations at once. He pointed to the bewhiskered Meussia.

"He say he ride horse you call Blue Goose. Think so?"

"I don't give a damn if he rides him every day in the p'rade," said Cherokee. "I wish he would."

That took some of the wind out of Victor's sails. Maybe we didn't care to bet any money. Gosh, that would be terrible! Why, it would be almost as bad as losin' it.

"He say he ride Blue Goose, go *swish* with the sword, holler Cossack yells!" continued Victor hopeful-like.

We almost fell off our trunks. Anybody who went *swish* with a sword and hollered Cossack yells had about as much chance of stayin' above Blue Goose as we had of stayin' all night in the White House with breakfast thrown in. Slim Harper had done his work well!

"Now, Meussia," said Cherokee reproachful-like. "You wouldn't really ride poor ol' Blue Goose and scare him to death, would you?"

Meussia said "Oouff!" and polished his mustache very business-like. Victor insisted that his gracious leader would do that very thing and if we cared to bet he couldn't, he would be more than happy to accommodate us, as far as their limited possibilities allowed—or words to that effect.

We wasn't very crazy about the idea, but since they wanted it that way, and just to be game sports, we would risk, say three

hundred dollars, no more. (Three hundred dollars represented a week's wages for six cowboys—not four—on the Golden Rule, but Victor never suspected anything funny about that.)

It happened that we had a week's wages comin' to us. We trooped to the office wagon the next morning and collected. Old man Jake Trigger was a pretty good sport and we told him what we had cooked up. We'd had to tell him anyway, since Blue Goose was his horse and Meussia aimed to take a settin' at him durin' the evening performance.

"Well, boys," said the old man, "I already lost one Cossack this season and I don't like the idea of losin' another one. Not for the love of 'em, you understand, but they're hard as hell to git, and make a pretty good drawin'-card, even if they do cripple a lot of stock."

We faithfully promised to take good care of Meussia. We would see that he didn't get hurt more than reasonable. Yes sir, we sure would.

AND so came twilight, after a perfect day. The evening performance rolled smoothly to its climax, before a record crowd of interested customers. The announcer informed the audience that he had a special treat in store for them. For the first time in history, a genuine Roossian Cossack was about to meet a wild American broncho, and attempt to master the animal.

We led Blue Goose to the center of the roped arena, nudgin' each other and bitin' our lips to keep from laughin' out loud. The old hellion was blindfolded and snubbed to a saddle-horse and we asked Victor which saddle his friend preferred to use. Victor replied that Meussia would use his own. We were struck dumb!

The big fool aimed to ride a tough horse in one of them there padded jokes with a high knob in front and back and a whole set of harness hangin' on each side! We would of gladly give two weeks' wages just to see that ride and here we were about to witness it with profit!

All the Cossacks decided to lend their leader a hand. They flocked around Blue Goose tyin' something here, bucklin' something there, gettin' in the way of each other, dodgin' wild kicks, gettin' a sword between their legs and fallin' down and otherwise puttin' on the funniest performance I ever had the pleasure of witnessin' in many a day. And durin' all that time

they kept up a never-ceasin' chatter which sounded like a bunch of magpies debatin' with a flock of crows.

I was snubbin' for them, and as I hung on the Goose's ears, I felt the old outlaw quiver and jerk. He had never been through such a saddlin' before and I figured that what he aimed to do about it was nobody's particular business but his own.

After inspectin' every strap very careful, Meussia settled himself between the big round, pillow-like pads of his saddle and grasped the reins. I felt Blue Goose relax and go limp. He wasn't the kind of a horse to exert himself before his chance came, now that he knew what was about to happen.

Cherokee stepped to Meussia's side. The grin on his face extended from ear to ear.

"Meussia, old boy," he said, "if you aim to do any sword-wavin', you better pull one of 'em now and go to it."

Victor translated Cherokee's words. Meussia looked like a man which had suddenly lost his desire to ride a buckin' horse. Now that he was about to enter the enterprise, the shadow of a doubt had wormed itself into his thick head. The confident grins on our faces were not as reassuring as they might of been. His lower lip hung down and had it not been for the lovely growth of hay on his face, I am sure he would of looked pale. I have myself growed pale, just before startin' out on a bronc' ride on old Blue Goose.

Meussia pulled out a long sword with all the dash of a man about to be hung for horse-stealin'. He held the thing above his head, waitin'.

"And about them Cossack yips," continued Cherokee. "You better be lettin' 'em out before you git turned loose, for afterwards 'll be too late."

"Oouff!" said Meussia, and I slid the snubbin' rope, jerked the blindfold and jumped my horse aside.

BLUE GOOSE swallowed his tail and leaped through the air. The big fur-edged, full-skirted red coat opened out like a parachute; the sword lost contact with its owner, flew straight up like an arrow, punched a hole in the big top and disappeared into the night. Blue Goose landed with a grunt, and a heavy buckle arose from somewhere and hit Meussia smack between the horns.

The yell that followed might of been a Cossack yell, but there was a note in it

which did not indicate pleasure of accomplishment.

Meussia had found a better use for his sword-wavin' hand. With it, he obtained a death-grip on the high knob in front of him. But even that didn't insure him a solid seat on the twistin', leapin' horse; so he threw away his reins and grasped the knob behind with his other hand. In that compromisin' position, it looked like he might weather the storm, that is, if he was man enough to stand the punishment caused by the continual, fearful poundin' on his spine.

But various straps began to give and break under the strain. They flew apart here and there and the saddle started rollin' from side to side. It was too much for Meussia. He turned loose all holts and plowed a wide furrow in the sawdust with the back of his neck. Blue Goose kicked himself free from the offensive saddle with a snort of disgust, threw one final wingding at the moon for good measure and trotted off with a contented look in his old crafty eyes.

Meussia lay in a pantin' heap, surrounded by his despoiled followers. The performance was over and the crowd began filin' out.

IT was a very happy bunch of cowboys which collected six hundred dollars from old man Jake Trigger. But we committed a very serious mistake by dividin' the money right there and then.

"Eh!" yelled our boss. "Don't you know you boys is supposed to be on the outs with each other? What do you mean, a-splittin' that there money and kissin' one another? If them Roossians see you there'll be hell to pay!"

In our joy and happiness we had forgot all about the faked hard feelin's. But now it was too late; the Cossacks had seen us. They deserted their fallen head-man and started toward us lookin' very hostile and mad. We might of knowed that they would never give up three hundred dollars without a fight. They had swords and knives galore; we had nothing but our hands.

"Duck!" yelled somebody, and we rushed for an exit, the bloodthirsty Cossacks after us.

The openin' in the canvas was crowded with a large number of closely packed spectators workin' their way out. We plowed our way through in wedge formation without regard for whoever stood in our path.

We were runnin' for our lives. The mob saw the chargin' Cossacks and pulled all the sidewall down in their frantic efforts to reach fresh air and open country.

ONCE outside, we paused long enough to gather the longest, heaviest tent-stakes which we could find. Armed with them effective weapons, we felt braver and returned to meet the Roossian army.

They were kinda surprised at seein' us back so soon. We observed that Meussia had recovered enough to limp along with the rest, squallin' loudly for revenge. It was six against seven and tent-stake against steel. For heavy, substantial fightin' purposes, I'll take a tent-stake every time.

Amidst a mob of screamin', stampedin' folks, we battled them wild Cossacks to a standstill. Swords and knives flew in every direction; red coats and whiskers littered the ground; Cossacks fell in a groanin' heap and did not rise again.

A whistle blew from somewhere. The cry "Riot!" rang in our ears. I looked aside and saw Cherokee beddin' down the last Cossack. I threw down my club, cupped both hands in front of my mouth and hollered in a loud tone of voice: "Scatter, cowboys—here comes John Law!"

Havin' won the war anyhow, the best thing to do was now to split up and leave a scene which would be too hot and lively even for us in a few seconds.

Cherokee and me bein' partners, we took out together, plantin' both feet far apart and headin' toward the railroad yards. A few minutes later we had successfully boarded the blind baggage of the Denver Limited.

THE next morning found us danglin' our feet at a lunch counter, a long, long ways from the wrecked Golden Rule.

"Anyway," said Cherokee, "we showed them *hombres* that ridin' at a lope was somethin' different from forkin' broncs."

"You damn' betcha!" I put in, balancin' an egg and two strips of bacon on my knife. "We got our money back, too. Poor old Manuel is the only loser; Pedro was some rooster, but not quite equal to a full-grown eagle."

"Oh, well," said Cherokee, "the next job I takes will not have any Cossacks connected with it."

On that we both agreed. We had seen enough of Cossacks to last us a couple of lifetimes.

Rose thought her nerves were thoroughly under control, but what she saw was a shock indeed.



Mysteries of Today

By CULPEPER ZANDTT

Illustrated by Ben Cohen

"The Case of Roger Vernon" vividly describes a peculiar murder mystery and the lively events which accompanied its solution.

FOUR men reached the Wall Street district one morning, in luxurious cars, and went up to secluded private offices far above the city streets. Two came down from palatial homes in Westchester, the other two from the Yacht Club float on the East River, where they had arrived in speedy gas-yachts from beautiful estates on the north shore of Long Island.

Shortly after they were in their offices, a powerful "bear" raid started on the Exchange, in three or four of the major securities. By one o'clock one of the men found himself slipping—under pressure too strong for him in spite of everything he could do. As he paced up and down, or stopped to gaze unseeingly down the Bay from his window in the Equitable, his expression was worried and his hands shook.

In a corner office on one of the upper floors of the Bankers' Trust Building, Roger Vernon leaned back in his mahogany

swivel-chair. At one end of his flat desk stood a ticker, and on a low cabinet near his left hand were several telephones.

Presently, he touched a button under the front edge of the desk—and his private secretary came in from the adjoining office.

"How much are you carrying now, Miss Marshall?" Vernon asked.

"Fifteen hundred shares. Practically every cent I could scrape up for margins."

"Throw the whole block on the market at once and take your short profit. Tell Gillis and Bostwick to do the same—every share they hold. I think all three stocks will drop another ten points—they may go a bit lower, but that's immaterial. At two o'clock, all of you get in and buy, no matter where the stock is! Hold what you buy for a month at least; no matter what the fluctuations are, *hold your shares!* Put the certificates in a safe-deposit box and forget 'em! Be damned careful nobody hears any of you talking about it—mask your brokers

so there's no chance of what they buy or sell being traced to this office. You'll make somewhere around seventy-five thousand on this deal; you can live on that very comfortably. If you *must* speculate—at some other time—don't risk more than five thousand. When you lose that, quit! Now go and sell what you're holding." He turned back to his desk.

AT five minutes past two the man in the Equitable, who was plainly showing the strain he was under, glanced at the tape, looked again, drew a breath of relief and sank back into his chair. Three of the stocks were up an eighth—some of the others had recovered three-eighths. He didn't understand it. He couldn't see how the figures were yet low enough for the mysterious "bears" to clean him out. But he sent out buying-orders at once to keep the stocks from slipping back under a stronger attack. Two other men in similar offices were doing exactly the same thing.

At two-fifteen, Rose Marshall picked up her desk phone and plugged in to the private office, but got no answer. Then she tapped on the opaque glass of the door with her pencil and listened for his voice—still there was nothing but silence. Turning the knob, she found the door locked. Then she knew that something was seriously wrong. Hurrying out into the main hall and down a smaller side-passage, she found the rear door of the private office unlocked, and went in. Roger Vernon always made a point of keeping that door, which was of solid oak with no glass, locked and bolted with case-hardened steel—except when he had some reason for using it himself. When she came around the carved oak screen which concealed the door from Vernon's callers, she saw him seated at his desk—but with an unnatural stillness in his position. Locking and bolting the door to prevent any intrusion from that direction, she forced herself to go around in front of his desk and look at him. She thought her nerves were thoroughly under control, but that which she saw was a shock indeed.

Vernon had sagged back in his chair with his right arm resting upon the glass top of the desk—a .38-caliber automatic, with a "silencer" clamped on the end of it, was held loosely in the fingers. On the front of his waistcoat was a blackened spot indicating that the pistol must have been discharged from a distance of less than a

foot. . . . Apparently, he had been dead nearly half an hour. The face was thoughtful—almost smiling—with no expression of pain or surprise.

Rose Marshall found it difficult to believe that this genial, friendly man could be dead. She placed her fingers upon the extended wrist, but there wasn't the slightest pulsation. Taking a small compact from her pocket, she held the mirror in front of his nose and lips; there was no trace of moisture whatever—the man was undoubtedly dead. Her nursing experience with the Red Cross in France steadied her as she stood there—thinking over her proper course for the next hour. The police, of course—but not just yet.

There was something inexplicable about this affair. She would have said that Roger Vernon was the last man in the city to commit suicide—particularly, when he had just pulled off the biggest coup of his financial life. He was a widower, with a married daughter in Europe. Rose knew practically all of his family affairs, and any theory of entanglement with a woman was negligible.

Yet—all the evidence in sight pointed, unquestionably, to suicide. The private door being unlocked might have been a suspicious circumstance were it not for the fact that it could not be unbolted from the outside—he must have opened it himself. Just why was purely speculative. He might have wished to reach some other part of the building without passing through his own outer offices. After a minute or two of silent consideration, she quietly unlocked the other door, went out through her own office and said quietly to one of the stenographers in the outer room:

"Gertie, a few minutes ago I heard you speaking to some reporters out here—saying they couldn't see Mr. Vernon until after the Exchange closed. Was Mr. Strachey of the *Tribune* with them?"

"He was in half an hour ago, Miss Marshall, and said he'd come back again. Perhaps that's him out in the hall now."

THE door opened, and Strachey came in.

"I was hoping you'd persuade the Boss to see me, Rose—for a couple of minutes, anyhow," he said, going back with Miss Marshall to her own office. "Everything's busted wide open in the Street!"

"Well, you can see him, Bill—but you're due to get a jolt! I don't think I've ever been so glad to see anybody in my life as when you came in! I—"

"Say! . . . Turn around here! What's up?" exclaimed Strachey in sudden alarm.

"Come into the private office—and see! I want your advice before I send for the police—there's something about this I don't understand! He was the last man in this town to kill himself!"

Without disturbing even a piece of furniture, Strachey walked around the dead man, studying closely all there was to be seen.

"As to probabilities—I agree with you," he said at last. "If, as I suspect, he was behind this bear raid, he must have been 'sitting pretty' at the moment he died. No apparent reason for bumping himself off, that's sure. But— Say! Only one way of getting into this office, isn't there?"

"No—there's a solid oak door behind that screen, opening upon a little side-passage. It was always locked and bolted when he was not in, but he sometimes slipped out and came back that way when he wanted to avoid observation. That door was unlocked. Presumably he had been out for a few moments and then forgotten to lock it again. On the other hand, the door into my office *was* locked—as if he didn't want me to get in before he was quite gone. When I couldn't open my door, I came around through the little passage and got in that back way—found him just as you see—apparently dead less than half an hour."

"Well—that powder-mark on his vest apparently outweighs anything else which might look suspicious—the gun wasn't a foot from him when it was fired. Had anyone been standing behind him, he would have turned partly around. But the position of his body is natural and relaxed. Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would say without hesitation that he killed himself—"

"I can't believe it! Perhaps it's just mistaken intuition—but I just don't believe it! Oh, I wish some really first-class solver of mysteries could see him before the police come!"

"Hmph! Why not? Although I don't agree with your hunch, that's a sound idea. You've heard me speak of my friend, Bart Normanton—a portrait-artist who has solved a number of baffling disappearances, and more serious crimes, after everybody else gave them up. I can get him here in ten minutes. Shall I?"

"Please do, Bill! Yes, I've heard of Mr. Normanton."

Covering the phone with his handker-

chief to prevent fingermarks, Strachey picked one up from the cabinet and called a Bowling Green number.

"That you, Bart? Can you come around to the office of Roger Vernon, Bankers Trust, at once—with your 'glove outfit'? Ask for Miss Marshall. Right!"

WHEN Normanton was taken into Vernon's office, after being given the few facts, he first made a careful inspection of everything around the dead man—then the room—noting positions of the chairs, the sofa, the safe built into the wall, the pictures, wardrobe and lavatory.

"You haven't sent for the police yet, Miss Marshall?" he inquired.

"No—for I don't believe he killed himself! After the police have been here—probably with reporters, and others—everything will be so messed up that a detective won't have much chance—certainly not as good a one as you have now! And I'm perfectly willing to say so to the police when they come!"

"It may make a bit of trouble for you—but I hope not much," Normanton commented.

For ten minutes, he asked a number of apparently irrelevant questions—but Rose Marshall replied as clearly as possible to each of them. Then he eased the pistol from the dead man's hand—holding it by the middle of the barrel with a handkerchief over his fingers—dusted a bit of fine powder on the metal parts and rubber stock, blew the surplus powder off with a rubber bulb, then supported it against a couple of books and took several photographs, with a pocket camera. Articles on the desk, knobs of the private door and faucets in the lavatory, he powdered and photographed the same way.

Returning to the office, Normanton carefully restored the pistol to the dead man's grasp and as the fingers were beginning to stiffen he bent them until they were again grasping the stock. Normanton now nodded, as if satisfied that he had gotten all he needed.

It was just forty minutes since Vernon's body had been discovered. At once Miss Marshall called the police station—asking if the Captain and two patrolmen would come around to Vernon and Company's office at once—and also called a physician whose offices were in the same building.

The four men came in together, and were shown into the private office, where

Miss Marshall introduced them to Strachey and Normanton. Both the latter were known to the doctor and the police—who didn't particularly relish finding them there but could not raise any valid objection.

Roger Vernon had been a man powerful enough to get most anything he wanted done, and his private secretary was a woman in a position to give orders and make decisions for herself. She quietly told the Captain that knowing of Normanton's amazing success in solving mysteries which had baffled everyone else, she had

"You're quite positive about this being suicide, Captain?"

"A ten-year-old boy could see that, couldn't he? Right arm lying on the desk—gun held tight in the fingers! Fired less than a foot from his chest—with a silencer, so that his secretary in the next office wouldn't hear anything! Sure, it's suicide! What else?"

"Will you promise to let the coroner form that same opinion and give it to the press as undisputed fact, Captain? My reason is this: I'd like to get all suspicion



Normanton supported the pistol against a couple of books and took several photographs with a pocket camera.

considered it advisable to have him look at everything in the private office before it was disturbed in any way—acting partly upon her own initiative and partly in the interests of Vernon's daughter, then in Europe. Strachey, as she explained, would later give out what she thought could be published.

The Captain nodded in assent, if not in approval. He had nothing to do with the reasons behind the affair nor with its financial aspects. The obvious facts, however, were clear enough for a child to see.

"I'll have the coroner around within an hour, Miss Marshall—he and Doctor Findlay, here, can make their examination together. Then we'll be through. The case is self-evident suicide on the face of it—no argument in the matter!"

Before the Captain started out to telephone from the other office, Normanton said quietly:

of anything else so completely lulled that nobody is going to look into the matter more closely. See?"

"Sure I see; but you're nutty, Normanton, if you have any other theory—it's too plain a case! You bet I'll promise—if that's any satisfaction to you."

"Thanks. Now listen to a couple of questions I'm going to ask Miss Marshall.—Miss Rose, you knew Mr. Vernon well enough to be thoroughly aware of any little habits and peculiarities, didn't you? Was he naturally a right-handed man? Or did he almost invariably use his left hand?"

"Why—his left hand—always! He often joked with me about it—said he sometimes forced himself to use his right hand, but had to keep his mind on it all the time."

"Look at these telephones—on the left side of his chair. Look at that right hand and pistol, on the desk. Not suicide, gentlemen—but murder!"

Even then, it took the idea a minute or so to penetrate. Then the Captain muttered softly:

"Well, I'll be damned! I've certainly got to hand it to you, Normanton! I never thought of asking anybody that question! And I'll bet nobody else does, after the bare facts are published! I doubt if his own daughter would recall that—after not seeing him for a year or so; nobody would unless he or she'd been living right alongside of the man every day. Very few of us notice little things like that. I can see exactly why you wanted that promise—if you are retained in charge of the case, I'll see that it's strictly carried out. Doctor Findlay—you'll not let the coroner suspect what you've just heard! If he even thinks of asking that question, it'll be showing a different sort of intelligence from any he's had yet. We'll wrap that gun up carefully and examine it for other fingerprints beside Mr. Vernon's—"

"Mightn't it be worth while to have your fingerprint man come here to photograph the furniture, desk, door-casing and things in the lavatory?"

"If he does it right now, it'll give away your bluff on the suicide theory, for most of the reporters know our fingerprint experts. If we lock up the office and Miss Marshall keeps the keys, nobody'll try to get in there. Our men can come in after the funeral—she can let 'em in that back door, and nobody'll spot 'em."

BY this time, the rumor had crept about the building—emphatically denied by those who supposed Vernon still operating through his brokers. Then insistent—more definite: "*Roger Vernon Kills Himself in His Office!*" The brokerage houses with whom he dealt under cover, were made up of responsible men who knew that trickery had a way of coming back with boomerang effect—so none of them even thought of attempting to juggle with the orders received from his office that day, and methodically sent around detailed statements of their transactions, before closing.

In Miss Marshall's office, the four men talked with her in subdued tones until the coroner came in—everyone else was denied admittance. After a brief examination, the coroner hastened out into a few of the other offices to empanel a jury for the purpose of viewing the body before it had been moved, and after this had been done he said to the lot:

"If you gentlemen can reach a general decision within the next half-hour as to the cause of death, I won't have to trouble you again until you're called to hand in an official verdict at some later time, and that will be merely a matter of form, taking only a few minutes. You've been looking on while Doctor Findlay and I unfastened the clothing and examined the wound. You agree there was just the one shot, straight through the heart; death was practically instantaneous. The rest of the cartridges are still in the magazine, as you saw. Any questions you'd like to ask?"

One of the clerks from a neighboring office thought of a question:

"Was it his own gun, Doctor?"

"That would be almost impossible to say with any certainty. Even if he had other pistols in his possession, he might have bought this one very recently. I think that point is immaterial. Don't you, Captain Fogarty?"

"Well—as you say, it would be very difficult to prove whether it was Mr. Vernon's or not—it's entirely possible that it was. Taking into consideration the position of the body and the arm on the desk, appearances would indicate that he used it on himself, at any rate—whether it belonged to him or not—wouldn't they?"

"Oh, unquestionably! You catch the point, don't you, sir?"

The clerk was entirely satisfied—and the other men nodded in agreement.

"Guess there isn't any doubt as to Vernon's committing suicide, Coroner! I'll say he did—for one." And there was not a dissenting voice.

The verdict was unanimous. Miss Marshall wrote it out on her machine, in official phraseology, at the coroner's dictation—after which all the men signed it and filed out of the office. The coroner and Dr. Findlay then laid the silent figure on the sofa and went away—Findlay agreeing to make the necessary arrangements.

Strachey hurried uptown to his own editorial rooms after saying he would return later. This left Captain Fogarty and Normanton with Miss Marshall in her office.

The artist closed the door and sat down to go over the case, partly for the Captain's benefit.

"If we're going to get anywhere in this matter, Miss Marshall, you and I will have to work together—and it's only fair to exchange information with Captain Fogarty whenever we can; we'll accomplish more

if we do. First—let's take up that point about the pistol. It wasn't Vernon's, of course—that should be obvious."

"No," Rose agreed, "and there's one very good reason why he wouldn't have purchased it—his own automatic, of the same caliber, is in that top left-hand drawer of his desk right now! He had three out at his Long Island house—two automatics and his big Army six with a tip-out cylinder, which he used to carry in the mining country when he was riding over mountain trails. Had police permits to carry them. Now—had he been going to commit suicide in that office—he would have known the fact must be discovered in half an hour, whether he made any noise or not—so there would have been no object in his screwing that silencer on the muzzle. He'd simply have fired the shot and let me come running in if I heard it—or, even more likely, have come back after office-hours and done it without disturbing anybody. As a matter of fact, he'd have been more likely to go off on one of the coast steamers and jump overboard in the night, at sea. No shock to anybody, that way."

"That's about as I'd size him up, too. The pistol was brought into that office by somebody who'd been intending to kill him—had it in mind long enough to have that silencer specially made for just such an occasion as this. A special connection had to be made to clamp over the sliding jacket—and with a long enough recoiling-space inside to leave over an inch between the muzzle and the inner ribs of the silencer. I never saw one of those appliances fitted that way before—so it must have been a special job. One of your tasks, Captain, is to have your men round up the gunsmiths and see if you can't find one who did such a job for somebody. The murderer would not take the chance of ordering anything like that through sporting-goods dealers. Of course silencers may be made, now, to fit this type of automatic—but if they are, it would be a smoother, better job than this one. If you do succeed in tracing anybody who ordered such a job, you've got the murderer or his accomplice."

"Say, Normanton—that's a pretty good line of reasoning, and I can't see any other loose thread sticking out at present. Guess I'll go put a couple of men on this right away! You let me know if you turn up anything else—and I'll tell you about anything we strike. I'll leave two patrolmen to keep order in the halls and see that no-

body gets into these offices unless he has business here. We don't want to be any more annoying than we have to, Miss Marshall. I'll take the chance of your running away—you seem to be well known here."

WHEN Captain Fogarty left, it was nearly five o'clock. The only others left in the Vernon suite were Fred Gillis the office manager, and Bostwick the chief book-keeper, who were entering on their records statements which had come in from various brokerage offices after the Exchange closed.

Sitting near the window in her office, Rose Marshall was looking speculatively at Normanton, wondering how a man who really possessed that sixth sense—"reliable intuition"—made it work to show him little important things that seemed invisible to everyone else. Just then he said:

"Miss Marshall, I sometimes take a flyer through brokers, but I know little or nothing about Wall Street methods or conditions. From a word or two dropped by Bill Strachey and headlines on the extras, I infer there has been practically a panic in the Street all day. This must bear more or less upon Vernon's murder. You'll have to explain so that I'll understand it. As I get the idea, a 'bear raid' means that some man or syndicate deliberately depressed the market to force certain stocks down to a low level where they'd be dumped overboard and he could buy them for his own purposes. Now—who was the bear? What was he after? Who got the worst of it? Who got hit badly enough, let us say, to be temporarily crazy?"

"Mr. Vernon started the raid to get control of two railroads and a public-utilities company. He had that control by one-thirty this afternoon; he could have gone home then, as far as the result was concerned. James B. Laforce practically controlled one of the railways, with the proxies he held for stock not owned by him. Martin Brundage had the other road in about the same way, and Seth Jones had the utilities company. All three properties interlock in one way or another. With interests already owned by Mr. Vernon, they make a complete and very powerful system. Brundage stood to lose about nine-tenths of all his pile when his stock touched thirty-five, and all his proxies had sold out, panic-stricken. Jones might have had a million left when his stock had dropped twenty points. Had it gone much lower, he'd have been cleaned out completely.

Of course this is partly supposititious—I can't be positive about all their resources—but that's about as Mr. Vernon had sized it up, and it's the reason why he quit selling just as soon as he'd obtained certain control through another set of brokers. He had no personal spite against either of those three men, though they've put up more than one dirty deal to break him—and he really didn't want to strip them after he had gotten what he was after. Neither did he want to hurt innocent investors in a general smash. So he stopped before the thing was really disastrous.

"But neither of those three men had much idea that he would stop, had they? That's the point which keeps recurring to me as important," observed Normanton.

"If they knew he was really behind the raid, they'd probably figure he'd strip them—judging by themselves. But there was no possible way in which they could have been sure of that. Mr. Vernon's orders, today, were placed with brokers with whom he seldom deals."

"Hmph! Pretty good chance for some of them to welsh on his payments—knowing the man is dead. Might juggle their books and claim they never executed such orders for him!"

"Had the orders come from him as an individual, there might be some risk of that from two or three brokers who couldn't see how certain it was that they'd be suspended from the Exchange when caught. But we deal with none but responsible houses. And this is a corporation—a one-man corporation, I'll admit, but the death of any stockholder or officer makes not the slightest difference in carrying on the business of the company. I own five shares; Mr. Gillis, five; Mr. Bostwick, two; Mr. Vernon's daughter, twenty—the rest Mr. Vernon held himself."

"How much do you figure that today's transactions are worth to the Company? This all has a bearing on his murder, you know."

"Roughly, between three and four millions—when the whole consolidation is a unit. Marjorie Vernon White will inherit her father's shares and vote them as we suggest—with the approval of Mr. Vernon's counsel—who is one of the executors, with Marjorie and me."

"**T**HEN, getting back to those three other big fish in the financial ocean: Each one of them stood to lose, and undoubtedly

has lost, between one and two millions today—possibly more," said Normanton. "Of course they didn't lose it all to Vernon—but if they had any evidence that he was the raider, they'd blame him for all their losses, because he started the game and kept it going until they were nearly cleaned out. I've known men who'd commit murder for a tenth of that money! You say Vernon wouldn't have let the market go any lower—but those three wouldn't have believed that if you'd sworn it. Vernon was killed—and the market began to rise again within five minutes of that time. As circumstantial evidence, that's a pretty strong connection. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Why, yes. That hadn't occurred to me before! I've seen and talked with each of those three men. Jones is a Westerner—rough, and perhaps unscrupulous. I'd have said he'd be more likely to abduct Mr. Vernon bodily than to shoot him without a chance for defense. Laforce is rather a gentleman, with plenty of nerve and initiative. Brundage is smooth enough, but cowardly—a sneak—might do anything if he went suddenly crazy."

"Well, that bears out what little I know of them. I want you to tell Captain Fogarty, the first chance you get, just what you've told me about them—how much they stood to lose—their probable conviction that the market was going lower—and of its rise immediately after the murder."

"You think he'll arrest one of them?" Rose asked dubiously.

"I think he'll go into each of those offices with just that idea in mind—and be met with a perfect alibi in each case—statements, easily proved, that not one of the three left his office between the opening and closing of the Exchange."

"Then, what— I don't see—"

"Fogarty won't believe any of them. He'll be gunning around on the quiet for evidence against one of the three—and I'm rather gambling on the chance that the man who did commit the murder will put some such evidence in his way. From that point of view, it's too good a blind to pass up! When he does, I'll be feeling rather optimistic."

"You think I'm giving all my discoveries to the police, don't you—giving 'em every chance to walk away with all the credit? But I think I can afford to. None of them on this side of the Atlantic seems to have studied the real science of inference and



Normanton carefully examined the outer surface of the safe with a pocket flashlight and a magnifying-glass.

deduction. That's why I always prefer an English detective-story to one with the scene laid in the United States. They never arrest a murderer over there until they've got the goods—but then they invariably hang him. I wish we could say as much! Just between us, Miss Marshall, I don't believe that either of those three men committed the murder—though I'll accept the possibility that one of them might have been an accomplice—not one of them could afford to risk it! Men smart enough to play the market as they do would know that suspicion must fall upon them as the chief and heaviest losers. If one of them could plant the suggestion of the crime in some other mind without being himself implicated—yes. Possibly Laforce—more probably, Brundage. Not Jones—he'd do his own job if he were in the thing at all. As for the gunsmith who fitted that silencer—if I were the man who wanted it done, I'd never go to a gunsmith in this vicinity—I'd go to Chicago. That's where Fogarty'll have to go before he's through hunting. They specialize in trick guns out there."

"But now that you've pointed out the strong motive those men had, and the way the market immediately recovered—it seems to me rather obvious that we should be shadowing them to the exclusion of practically everything else! They could have found the opportunity, couldn't they?"

"That would have been about the easiest thing you could imagine. But I found before I'd been interested in crime-investiga-

tion six months that one should logically distrust anything which looks just a shade too obvious. Practically none of the mysterious crimes happen in a really obvious way. They seem to—and the police bank on the commonplace, obvious crime—they eat it up! They've executed more than one innocent person just by pinning it on the one to whom most of the evidence pointed. Let's drop the obvious for the moment and consider some things which the average person would never dream had any connection with the affair. You're familiar with the layout of these offices and halls, I assume?"

"Well, let's see. . . . This office of mine is on the corner of the main hall and that smaller passage—but has no door upon either, the only communications being with the large main office adjoining, and Mr. Vernon's private office back of it. This narrow 'L' running down the side of Mr. Vernon's room gives me the one window on the street. In the office next to me, there is the 'Information' girl behind the railing and there are the two stenographers. In the rear of that office and the other side of my 'L,' is Mr. Gillis' room with windows on Wall Street, like mine and Mr. Vernon's. Beyond his and the entrance-offices, is the bookkeepers'-and-clerks' room, overlooking Nassau Street. All of the hall-partitions and those around Mr. Vernon's room are solid lath and plaster ones, instead of the oak-paneling and glass with which the rest are divided. His door into this room has a

glass panel, but it is much thicker than the usual sort and the rest of the door is of thick oak, so that when he's talking in there I can't hear a word—nor can anybody in the other offices. Down the little passage is Mr. Vernon's private door—of thick oak, with no glass—then the glass-paneled door of a small office at the extreme end, occupied by a Mr. Schmidt, who deals in postage-stamps and coins for collectors—and the solid door of a scrubwoman's closet where mops and pails are kept with other odds and ends. Between Schmidt's office and the main hall is the large customers'-room of Sims & Peabody, brokers. They have no door in the solid partition of the little passage—but their room goes around Schmidt's office in a large 'L' with windows on Wall Street."

"I WONDER if anyone else in your offices, aside from Vernon himself, knows as much as you do about the general layout, Miss Marshall? I'll bet not one of them does! It's too difficult for most persons to visualize a floor-plan and imagine themselves looking down upon it. Now suppose that you were the intending murderer, and had got as far as the opening of that little passage. Would it occur to you that it might be a good point in an emergency to think up in advance some way by which you could quickly disappear from sight in case somebody in the hall was approaching the passage and might look down it?"

"I suppose it would. Yes—I know I'd have some such idea as that. Even if I'd never been there before, I'd know the solid door at the end must be a porter's closet—so I'd figure upon either popping in there if I had time, or else walking directly into the stamp-man's office and asking to look at some. That would be a perfectly plausible thing to do, because a stamp collector might be rich or poor—"

"That's good reasoning—except for one point, which would occur to the stamp-man if he suspected who his visitor was. No millionaire operator in Wall Street would be looking for stamps an hour before the Exchange closed—during a panic! On the other hand, it would look damned queer to anyone glancing down that passage if he saw a well-dressed man stepping out of a porter's closet. I'm assuming a hundred-to-one chance that there might have been a slight delay before Vernon heard any knock on that door and opened it. The murderer doesn't dare wait indefinitely near

Vernon's door—some one is bound to come along and see him. He thinks the porter's closet too risky—but he's pretty sure that no stamp-dealer knows him well enough by sight to recognize him, so he takes that chance. He doesn't know the first thing about stamps, but has heard that some few of them are worth great amounts, so he goes in after information—asks what the ten or fifteen most valuable specimens are, and their approximate value—where they would be obtainable—"

"Hmph! . . . If he knew Mr. Vernon at all well, he might save himself that trouble!" Rose broke in. "Mr. Vernon was a stamp-collector all his life—he had a number of the rarest specimens in a private compartment of that safe in his office. We figured them up one day, at a catalogue value of something over eighty thousand dollars. Of course no collector would expect to realize the full list-price for what he had—but the joke of it is that frequently some crazy 'bug' will pay a good deal more than that, feeling that he just must have a certain specimen in his collection. Mr. Vernon's collection is in a trunk at the safe-deposit vaults and he very rarely sold any of his specimens unless he had picked up a duplicate somewhere. I'm under the impression that some of those in this safe are duplicates—but most of them are not; he liked to keep the rarest stamps where he could enjoy comparing them with catalogue illustrations."

"What are his most valuable ones?"

"Well, the four-cent blue British Guiana of 1856—listed at four thousand dollars. The Baden 1851—nine kreutzer black on green error—listed at eleven thousand. The Hawaiian two-cent blue of 1851—twelve thousand. The Spanish two-real blue, 1851—worth over twelve thousand because of an error in color. Only two of those five have been on the market for some time. And a dozen more, worth from two to five thousand each."

"Hmph! . . . That's a lot of money for little scraps of paper which the Government issuing them wouldn't redeem at face value! If Schmidt knew Vernon for a collector, they might easily have done some trading together—or at least compared specimens. I suppose Mr. Vernon was the only person who knew the combination of that safe—eh?"

"Except myself. He permitted me to keep some of my private papers and jewelry in it."

"That's better luck than I could have looked for! Let's lock the door and go through that safe. There were no marks of force on it—you two were the only ones who had the combination. Logically, there can't be anything missing from it. But—"

BEFORE permitting Rose to turn the knob, Normanton carefully examined the outer surface of the safe around the knob and handle, with a pocket flashlight and a magnifying-glass. As there were several fingerprints, he photographed them. Inside—in the almost impalpable dust on an inch of mahogany shelf projecting beyond the door of the private compartment—there were three distinct fingerprints which he also photographed. From among the articles on the desk, taken from the dead man's pockets, Normanton took a bunch of keys and opened this compartment. Miss Marshall removed a number of temporary stamp-holding cards from a long envelope, ran through the specimens, systematically—then did it a second time, to be sure.

"Every specimen worth over a thousand dollars is gone! But I can't for the life of me see anything really incriminating in that fact! You saw for yourself that no attempt was made to open this safe by force. There was no written memorandum of the combination in existence, and no one but us two knew it—we changed the numbers three weeks ago. Nobody but Mr. Vernon or I *could* have opened the safe—there's no argument upon that point. Of course he might have opened it himself to get out something he wanted to show a visitor—and been killed before he could close it. But how could the visitor have known where to look for those stamps—where to find the key to that compartment? He couldn't have been here more than fifteen minutes altogether! As nearly as I can tell from this few minutes' search, there isn't another thing missing—cash, securities, some of Marjorie's and my jewelry are all just where they should be! It's entirely possible that Mr. Vernon himself took the stamps out sometime during the last month, and transferred them to the safety-vault in his Long Island house—or even let some friend he could trust have them on a receipt, for examination."

"Yes, all of those suppositions are possible, but logically, only one of them is *probable*—his being killed while the safe was still open, by somebody who knew him

for a confirmed collector, and had heard about his keeping those rare specimens in that safe. If we could only dig up some evidence, now, that either Laforce, Brundage or Jones is a confirmed stamp-bug with an expensive collection of his own—eh? If we could find out that one of them had been in the habit of commissioning this dealer Schmidt to hunt out rare specimens for him—and Schmidt happened to drop the information that Vernon, just across the little passage, had a lot of rare ones. Suppose that some such talk did occur between them—that Schmidt suggested the man's knocking on that door of the private office and asking Vernon for a glimpse of his specimens? Schmidt would be looking through the crack of a partly open door to see if his customer was admitted by Vernon, wouldn't he?"

"Why—yes—I'd say that's exactly what he might do! And if the customer was really calling upon him merely as an emergency blind, that would be playing right into his hands, of course!"

"All right! I'm going to get Fogarty around here again, at once! There's a light in Schmidt's office—he hasn't gone home yet."

It took the Captain less than fifteen minutes to show up—evidently he had been hoping that Normanton would find some fresh evidence. Usually it gives the police of any city a severe pain to find any sort of private investigator meddling in what they consider their own particular job—but Normanton had solved mysterious crimes which the Department had abandoned as hopeless, and he was exceptionally decent about sharing his discoveries with them.

"Captain—you may have heard somewhere that there has been a panic in the Street today. Vernon started the raid to get control of three different companies. He had it by one-thirty, and got out of the game with probably three or four millions. If three other men guessed that he was behind it, they never would have believed he'd let go until he smashed 'em—because that's the way *they'd* have played it. Just five minutes after he was killed, the market began to recover!"

"Those men are Laforce—Brundage—Jones. If one of them happens to be a stamp-collecting bug, doing occasional business with this man Schmidt, at the end of the little passage—and Schmidt told him Vernon was also a collector, with a num-

ber of rare specimens in his office—Schmidt would be pretty likely to know whether his customer stepped across the passage and knocked at Vernon's private door for stamps or any other purpose, wouldn't he? Catch the point? Schmidt's in his office now. Go around there before he gets away—find out whether he saw anyone knocking at Vernon's door."

CAPTAIN FOGARTY quietly slipped out through the hall and down the passage. In twenty minutes he was back, glancing at Normanton with increased respect.

"I don't know how in hell you dig up your facts, old man—but you certainly get the goods! That bird wasn't going to loosen up at all—said he minded his own business and didn't waste time watching where his customers went after leaving him. But when I mentioned Vernon as a stamp-collector and asked if he'd hinted anything of the sort to a customer who was after rare specimens, he seemed to figure that I must know a good deal more than I do; he let me dig out of him that one of his stamp-bugs did come in this afternoon on the track of a two-cent blue Hawaiian of 1851—the only rare one that was canceled—and that he told him he had heard of Vernon's having a specimen which he probably wouldn't sell for less than twenty thousand, if he'd even let it go for that. Told him the oak door opposite led into Vernon's private office—but doubted very much if he'd be admitted that way. His description fits Laforce like a glove, but he thinks he could identify the man from a photograph—which I'll show him tomorrow or the next day. Schmidt didn't know the man's name—said he'd bought several thousand dollars worth of stamps from him, but always paid in cash—never drew a check. If Schmidt identifies the photograph, I'll arrest Laforce within fifteen or twenty minutes—his office is close by."

"I'll bet you a box of cigars you don't, Captain!"

"Why wont I?"

"You'll run against an alibi from every man in his office."

"I don't give a damn for alibis—with any such evidence as this!"

"You'd better! He's big enough—even half-busted—to break you if it's a mistake. Lay low—get all the evidence you can—grill him if you like—but don't smash through an unshakable alibi until you're a

damned sight more sure of the facts than you are now! My impression is that one of those three men may even be an accessory to the crime—but you can call on me for a darned good suit of clothes if it proves to be Laforce!"

Normanton walked as far as the elevator with the Captain when he left. As the two stood there talking for a moment, Schmidt came out into the hall and rang for the elevator. He glanced at Normanton in a puzzled way as if trying to recall where he'd seen him before, and while going down, he asked the operator if he knew the man who was talking with Captain Fogarty.

"Him? Well, they tell me he's one of the biggest private 'dicks' in the country—feller by the name of Normanton. Pretends to be an artist down in one o' them Broad Street buildin's—he's got a studio there—but o' course that's only a blind. Might know Vernon's comp'ny would hire the best they could get—but I don't see what they want no detective for, when the old boy bumped himself off!"

Next morning, Normanton phoned Bill Strachey to dig up all the information he could on Laforce, Brundage and Jones for the last couple of generations. Normanton then called upon Schmidt, soon after the man arrived at his office, said he was writing a magazine article on rare stamps, and offered a couple of dollars if Schmidt would write out for him a list of the fifty most valuable stamps in existence. Schmidt was watching his visitor very keenly, but he saw nothing strange in this request. A wide-mouthed bottle of ink stood on a badly stained blotter—there being no regular inkstand—and he drew a letterhead from one of his desk-drawers.

When he had written a few lines, Normanton suddenly jumped as if something sharp were sticking into him—knocking over the ink-bottle with his elbow.

"I beg your pardon, sir! A tack must be sticking out of the seat of this chair—and I sat on it! Gee! Sorry I mussed up your list! Make it another dollar for my carelessness!" The ink had poured across the letterhead, flowing around several of Schmidt's fingers as he was holding the paper and writing. Looking disgustedly at the spoiled sheet, he wiped his fingers on it and another scrap of paper—tossing both of them into the wastebasket under his flat desk. Then he went behind a little curtained-off space in one corner of the office to wash his hands. While he was doing this, Norman-

ton quietly drew the basket through to his side of the desk with his feet, fished out the inky scraps of paper, put them in his pocket, and shoved the basket back to its former position. Had Schmidt glanced around the corner of the curtain, his visitor would have seemed to be merely stooping over to tie a shoe-lace on the opposite side of the desk. . . .

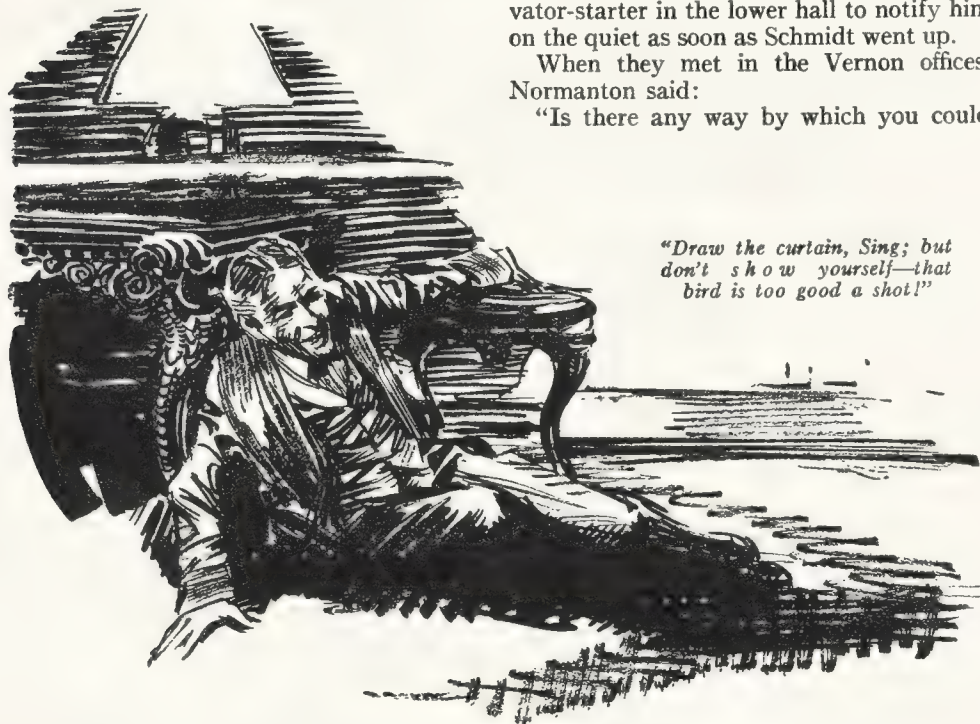
That night Normanton was standing by

down quite a lot of interesting information—partly from the *Tribune* "morgue," and more from the Genealogy Room of the Library.

Getting Captain Fogarty on the wire at once, Normanton found Fogarty had secured a good picture of Laforce and was going around to Schmidt's office with it shortly after nine. However, Normanton asked the Captain to meet him first in Miss Marshall's room in the Vernon suite, ordering the elevator-starter in the lower hall to notify him on the quiet as soon as Schmidt went up.

When they met in the Vernon offices, Normanton said:

"Is there any way by which you could



*"Draw the curtain, Sing; but
don't show yourself—that
bird is too good a shot!"*

his big window in the lighted studio, looking out reflectively at the sparkling electric lights around the Bay, when a steel-jacketed bullet drilled through the plate glass, passing between his left arm and side, and buried itself in the plaster of the opposite wall. Experience during the old days in France made him instinctively drop—a second and a third shot would have passed through his head if he hadn't. As Sing Wah came running in from the kitchenette, his employer smilingly waved him back out of range, from where he sat on the floor.

"Draw the big curtain, Sing—but don't show yourself! That bird is too good a shot! Tomorrow night I don't think we'll need to worry about him—we're going to have a few plain words in the morning."

Before breakfast Strachey telephoned

positively identify any of Vernon's missing stamps, Miss Marshall?"

"Yes. I can identify three of them absolutely. The blue Hawaiian had a little spatter of red ink across the top. The British Guiana black on blue had a small bit of the right upper corner torn off. And the Spanish error-blue was canceled with two diagonal pen-strokes, slightly heavier at the upper end."

"By jove! Our luck seems to hold! Now, Captain—if you'll coöperate with me exactly as I lay it out, I think I can promise you the murderer of Roger Vernon before night."

"What do you want me to do?" the Captain tacitly agreed.

"Go around to Schmidt with that photograph as soon as we know he's in his office.

When he identifies it, call in one of your patrolmen from the passage to witness the identification. Patrolman stands in a position where he can grab both the fellow's hands before he either picks up a phone, draws a gun, or slips a hand into any pocket. If your man isn't quicker than Schmidt, somebody's going to get hurt—so have your own gun ready. While the fellow is looking at the picture, I come in with Miss Marshall. You're responsible for any move that bird makes. He fired at me three times last night, through the window of my studio, from the roof of a building on Stone Street—and missed by a scant eighth of an inch. So as soon as we come in, get the handcuffs on him temporarily—just in case. After that, you and your man are all set for the show."

NORMANTON'S plan went through like clockwork. As he and Rose Marshall came in Schmidt was examining the picture of Laforce—the door of his big safe standing open behind him so that he could reach the shallow drawers in which his stock of stamps were kept.

When the handcuffs were snapped on Schmidt's wrists, Miss Marshall went behind him to the safe, pulled out a few of the drawers, then selected a narrower one with a spring-catch, at the top. In an onion-skin envelope were the twenty-two stamps stolen from Vernon's safe, three of which she identified as she laid them out on the desk.

Normanton grinned, though his eyes bored steadily into those of the manacled and sullen man opposite.

"Schmidt—you might have gotten away with it if it hadn't been for the stamps! Those twenty-two in the envelope cost Roger Vernon around eighty thousand—undoubtedly you have customers who will pay considerably more for the lot."

Miss Marshall had been going through the cash-drawer, and now handed him a check for twenty thousand dollars, signed by Brundage.

"Hmph!" Normanton ejaculated. "This check must be for one or two rare stamps which you've secured for Mr. Brundage, of course. That's the perfectly natural explanation for it—your business being what it is. But Brundage dated the check one day ahead—today—the inference being that it was made out after banking hours yesterday. And Vernon was shot about two o'clock. Almost seems as though this

check might have been payment for something that wasn't stamps—some business which you had carried out for him successfully! Eh? Particularly as your real name is not Schmidt, but Sneed—and this Brundage happens to be your step-brother! Then again—there was that hectic day on the Exchange two years ago, when Laforce cleaned Brundage out and took your little pot as well. Neither of you seem to have forgotten that. Naturally, when you saw the perfect chance Captain Fogarty gave you to get even with Laforce by implicating him in Vernon's murder, you jumped at it—walked right into my trap! Circumstantial evidence pointed to Laforce as a suspect, anyhow—and you didn't see how you could lose by identifying him. And you'd been so all-fired careful to wear gloves when you went into Vernon's private office that you didn't leave a fingerprint on the gun, doorknobs, or even in the washroom. But when it came to fingering the thickness of a rare stamp to be sure it wasn't a forgery, you needed all your delicacy of touch. The gloves came off. You left three plain prints on that little mahogany shelf-edge in front of the safe-compartment. And when I upset your ink-bottle here yesterday, you left six or eight bully prints on those scraps of letter-paper you chucked into the basket! When you afterward couldn't find those scraps, one assumes that you were annoyed, and wondered if I really could have had any object in upsetting that ink? So you thought you might as well eliminate me—I made a fine target in that studio-window with the lights behind me.

"Well, I'll admit that the breaks have been all in my favor, Sneed,—most unusually so,—but you certainly helped all you could, didn't you? As a matter of cold fact, Sneed, I think this was about as brutal and inexcusable a murder as ever has come into my experience. I'll make a point of seeing that both you and Brundage go to the chair for it!

"There's your prisoner, Captain; and you'd better arrest Brundage before he gets scared and skips! If either of those men is admitted to bail, I'll hound off the bench the Judge who does it!"

Miss Marshall had been watching Normanton breathlessly, as he made point after point, like falling drops of ice-cold water. She couldn't find a word to say; but she had the feeling that she would like to take him apart and see how his brain really worked!



Gunsight Forever

By RAY
HUMPHREYS

*A lively tale of men and
mules and of a great race in
the Colorado hills.*

Illustrated by
Frank Hoban



*"Well, ol'-timer," said Owens, "if
you've nerve enough to drive
those mules again, there's no
doubt about who'll win!"*

THE setting sun gleamed redly on the dust-streaked windowpanes of the Gunsight town hall. Old Dad Stewart, senior driver for the Gunsight stage-lines, white-whiskered, wrinkle-faced, sat on the box of his big Concord mountain coach, and looked at those fiery windowpanes, as he spoke in a soothing drawl to the six shiny black mules which stood fidgeting in their traces.

"Mules," said old Dad, with a ghost of a smile flickering through his whiskers, "this is July three an' tomorrow's July four, aint it—an' that's *the* day fer us! It aint every day we gits to go to the rodeo, an' it aint every day we gits to perform in it, either! We'll show that Central City rodeo what a Gunsight outfit kin do, I reckon. It's too bad we got this special trip t'night, but we'll take it sort o' easy, an' mebbe—"

Loud voices, raised angrily in squabbling, echoed from the Gunsight town hall. At the interruption old Dad glared fixedly at the scarlet windowpanes, and shook his head sadly, but he went right on in his discourse to his mules.

"It's too dang bad we got to make this

evenin' trip inter Central City," drawled Dad Stewart, talking just loud enough so that Nigger, his off leader, kept looking back inquiringly, "but the supe says to me, 'Dad, we got to send a special stage down t'night with them Denver mine-owners that are up here arguin' wages with the mine committee, an' I've picked you to go.' An' I says to him: 'Boss, then I better take a hitch o' scrubs an' save my mules fer tomorrow,' an' he says: 'No, Dad, you take your blacks; they kin rest up in Central City all tonight, after you git in, an' all tomorrow mawnin', 'fore the rodeo, an' they'll be fresher than ef you took the mail in on the reg'lar trip tomorrow.' An' I thinks fer a minute, an' I says: 'Good—'"

SUDDENLY the big double doors of the Gunsight town hall opened and erupted a small group of shouting, gesticulating men. All of Dad's mules turned long ears in that direction. Old Dad shifted his gaze from the sun-tinted windows to the men tumbling out of the old frame building. There was Eddie Owens, the Denver millionaire, and principal owner of the "Big O Tunnel." There was Floyd Penny, the Denver lawyer who represented the Gold Gopher Syndicate, operating six mines in the Gunsight district. There was David Brofman, operator of the Sunrise and Sun-

set mines, and Paul Clark, rich and a Denver clubman through the bounteous yield of his San Isobel diggings southwest of Gunsight.

"I wont compromise—I wont pay another red cent a day to any damned man on the Big O Tunnel!" Owens shouted as the group of mine-owners, flanked by the committee representing the Gunsight Miners' Association approached Dad's waiting coach. "I'm through talking! I'm hoarse from arguing—I'm through! If you men want to call a general strike, it's perfect with me—I'll close down the Big O, an' keep her closed down for ten years, if—"

"I've got authority from my New York office to close all six of the Golden Gopher properties," howled Floyd Penny, "an' I'm with Owens—not another damn' penny—we pay too much now. We'll close down in case of a walkout—"

"Gents, no use in goin' away mad!" cried Tom Egan, chairman of the miners' committee. "We don't want no strike—neither do the boys. We've offered to compromise on a dollar a day more—that'll bring wages in Gunsight up to a level with those bein' paid in the Central City district—"

"Not a dollar—not a red cent!" whooped Owens. "Strike if you wish—we'll close down tight—quick."

"That would kill Gunsight—wipe her off the map," cried Johnny Feeney, another of the miners. "You wouldn't do that!"

The portly Owens had reached Dad Stewart's coach. He yanked open a door and set his foot on the step, but Feeney's cry of dismay halted him. He turned and stared coldly at Feeney, and at Tom Egan, and at Joe Bennett, the miners. A sneer crept across Owens' face, and there was a snarl in his quivering voice as he spoke.

"Wouldn't kill Gunsight?" repeated Owens pompously. "Wouldn't I? Well, I'll tell you men something: I sure would kill Gunsight an' I've a mind to do it—as a lesson to her selfish, grasping inhabitants! I can manage to eat for a few years whether the Big O Tunnel produces or not! We can wipe this town off the map, as you say, and the mining industry of Colorado would be better for it. Higher prices when we did open up again—with a new town—five, six, ten years from now."

OWENS entered the coach. Penny and Brofman and Clark, the other owners, followed. Dad Stewart was speechless with horror. So, apparently, was the miners'

committee—Egan, Feeney and Bennett, who stood helplessly watching the capitalists depart from Gunsight. Kill Gunsight! Wipe it off the map—close the mines!

"Gents," exclaimed Egan, suddenly finding voice, "we gotta get together. Don't rush off like this—the stage kin wait. We *must* get together, that's all! Our boys are pretty sore—if I was to take them your message about killin' Gunsight, they'd like as not decide to do it fer you—mebbe burn the workin's—we have radicals amongst us, unfortunately. We must reach an agreement—we must compromise, gents, we—"

"Driver, drive on!" came Owens' order from within the stage. Dad Stewart stiffened in his seat. He gathered up the reins. Owens was one-third owner of the Gunsight stage-lines; he had to be obeyed. And it was time for old Stewart to be pushing his six sleek black pets towards Central City, anyway, if they were to get in to that city in time to snatch any rest before the Fourth of July rodeo, in which they were to defend the honor of Gunsight. The honor of Gunsight! Dad caught his breath sharply. What honor would there be in Gunsight if Gunsight was wiped off the map, either by the millionaire mine-owners, who now rode his coach, or the more radical miners who might apply the torch?

"Please, gentlemen, please wait!" cried Egan, of the miners' association. "Let's talk turkey. We'll concede—"

"Drive on, driver!" barked Owens from within the coach.

"Whoa, thar!" shrilled Dad suddenly, and his face twitched oddly as he hauled back on the ribbons. "Whoa, boys! Say, Egan, if you want, you might ride down with the bosses to Central City—you and your committee. Thar's room, an'—an'—"

The old stage-driver hesitated. Tears came to his eyes.

"We kin bring you back—t'night!" he went on. "After all, we don't have to be at that rodeo, me an' my mules, so—"

"What's the idea of this butting-in business, driver?" yelled Owens, sticking his head out of a door. "I said to drive on—we are through! I'm tired talking—"

"We'll ride down with you, I guess," said Egan briskly, to both Owens and Dad. And he flung open a door of the stage and stepped in. Penny and Brofman protested, but Bennett and Feeney, the other miners, stepped in too. The door banged.

"You thar, Nigger—you thar, Blackie!" cried old Stewart and the leaders lurched

into the collars. "You, Night—you Tar Baby!" ordered the old man, and the swing team tightened its traces. "Now, Darky, now, Satan!" The heavy wheelers responded instantly. The big coach groaned and creaked as Dad shook out the reins. The leaders broke into a trot, the swing team taking up the quickened pace reluctantly. The wheelers had to follow. The big stage was rolling! Dad Stewart, the oldest driver in the service, smiled down in fatherly fondness on the six sleek backs ahead of him. What an outfit! But—

sight stage-lines owned. He had picked the six himself. He had matched them in color, height, weight, and what was much more important, he had matched them in mule characteristics. He had picked six young animals, all devilish.

"Push along now!" cried Dad as the stage struck the Squaw Pass road. It was a long uphill climb to the top of the pass, then a long downhill coast into Central City. The mules met the grade vigorously. The big coach barely slowed—just enough to let Dad hear angry voices.



"No rodeo fer us," moaned Dad sadly as he swung his hitch around the corner and took the Squaw Pass road to Central City. "I dunno whether I done right or no—givin' up that rodeo jus' to fetch them miners back home t'night—but ef they could git together—mebbe ol' Gunsight might still stick on th' map—we meant to put her thar tomorrow at th' rodeo, didn't we, Nigger? Eh, Blackie? I'll say so—but now—giddap, giddap!"

The last rays of the setting sun were lingering, with soft caress, on the tops of the taller pines. Old Dad leaned slightly to one side and cocked an ear.

"Yep," he announced, to his mules, but so low that only the willing wheelers, Darky and Satan, might have caught the words, "they're arguin'—an' that's a good sign! I was scared Owens wouldn't talk none."

THE coach swayed and rocked to the tune of the arguments that waxed hotly within it. Dad Stewart smiled. They were good mules, his hitch were—the best stock out of the sixty-three head the Gun-

"Hey you, Blackie—an' you, Nigger!" screamed Dad. "Night—Tar Baby—Satan—Darky! Oh, you mules!"

"We asked fer two dollars more a day," Egan was repeating for the thousandth time, "but we come down to a dollar a day increase, Mr. Owens—we compromised, we conceded; an' that increase wont break the Big O Tunnel or the Golden Gopher properties—all it will do will be to put the Gunsight miners on a par with the Central City workers. We—"

"Nothin' doin', nothin' doin'," came Owens' ready refusal. "You can't talk me out of my senses, Egan! I've made up my mind. I wont concede one point. I wont raise wages one red cent. I will close down if necessary. I'm goin' to Europe anyway, for a rest! The stockholders can all afford to go to Europe—"

"But us miners," began Egan; "we—" "The miners can all go to hell," said Owens smugly.

That was as far as Dad listened. At that last remark from Owens, Stewart's eyes smoldered dangerously. A fine fellow, that Owens! He would destroy Gun-

sight! He had already destroyed Dad's hopes for the Central City rodeo on the morrow. Well—Dad drew his lips tight in a thin, straight line. He snatched the dusty whip from its socket. He hissed it out over the heads of his mules.

"Come on—come on!" he yelled, as the whip sang, and the mules plunged forward. The road was plenty steep, but that didn't matter to Dad or his mules.

ON the crest of Squaw Pass the lead team was already slowing up for the customary rest, when Tom Egan's head popped out of an open window.

"Stop, Dad, stop!" ordered Egan hotly. "I'm gettin' out—we're done—aint no use in wastin' more time."

"You bet you're through!" came Owens' taunt. "You can't talk me into dizziness, Egan, you danged agitator—"

At that word Egan suddenly withdrew his head, and that gave Dad the opportunity he wanted! He cracked the long whip again, dangerously close, this time, to the tips of the long ears of Nigger and Blackie. The leaders trembled.

"Giddap—giddap, Nigger; you, Blackie!" cried Dad loudly, and he swung again, hissing the lash out over his swing team. "An' you, Night—an' you, Tar Baby!" The swingers sprang into their collars. No need to call to the wheelers. They had to go, or let the heavy coach catch their lagging heels. They went. Sounds of scuffling came from within the coach, and then Egan's head popped out again. He was hatless this time. Desperately he held on to the sash and twisted his eyes up to Dad on the box.

"Let me out, Dad, let me out!" he cried. "The committee's gettin' out—stop the coach, Dad. We'll walk home."

The six mules were scampering down the far side of Squaw Pass now like six frightened jackrabbits. Old Dad, his eyes aglow with a strange light, clung to the ribbons. One heavy foot rested lightly on the emergency brake. The traces were tight. The big Concord coach swayed and creaked and protested eerily.

"What's the matter, Dad—you hear me, I said stop!" cried Egan, squinting in an effort to see old Stewart's face through the gloom of evening. "What's the speed for? I want to git out."

The panic in Egan's voice communicated itself to the other six occupants of the stage. In a moment Owens had his head

out. His face paled as he saw the speed with which bits of scenery were flashing past. He squirmed around until he could see the vague outline of the driver on the box. He shouted at Dad.

"Say, driver, what's wrong here?" he demanded uneasily. "This is a steep grade—seems to me we're hittin' the high spots pretty fast. Slow down—these men want out."

Dad Stewart, his face set in hard lines, hesitated. He couldn't very well tell Eddie Owens that he *wouldn't* stop, seeing that Owens was part owner of the stage-line. It would be better to play another card, he decided. He had no mind to stop and let the miners out, for that would mean the end of the conference and the doom of Gunsight. No, the stormy conference must go on, and there was only one way to prevent Egan and his men from leaving.

"I'm sorry, Owens," screamed Dad, leaning over from his bouncing seat, "but—the truth is, I—I kain't stop the mules. They're runnin'—runnin' hard—"

"My God!" cried Owens. "You mean—" "We got a chance," howled Dad through the dusk, "ef I kin keep them in the road. Yuh better keep your haid inside! Mebbe we kin come out safe, but—"

Dad shook out the lines again. The leaders, Nigger and Blackie, felt the swing team creeping up on them. Nigger and Blackie ran faster. The wheelers began to take it in great jumps, now, for the menace of the heavy coach was increasing. Down the long hill they went, in a cloud of dust. They had raced often for Dad, but never so recklessly as all this. The coach groaned and screeched, lurched dizzily, swayed this way and that—but still Dad continued to give the hitch their heads.

"Ef all had gone right," he muttered to himself, "we'd be doin' this stunt at the rodeo tomorrow afternoon in Central City—fer the honor o' ol' Gunsight—but seein' circumstances has prevented that, we might as well have our fling now. Hey thar, Nigger! Hey thar, Blackie! Night! Tar Baby! Darky! Satan!"

FASTER and faster the stage rolled ahead. Out came Egan's head again, and his cry echoed through the night air.

"What you hollerin' at them mules fer like that?" he wanted to know. "It makes 'em run all the faster. I aint aimin' to git kilt—I'm gonna jump. I'm gonna—"

"Then you will be kilt, Tom!" cried

Dad from his perch. "No man could jump from this stage the way we're goin! Put your head back in—an' say your prayers."

The angry voices within the coach had long subsided. Shouts of terror and dismay had taken the place of arguments. Each time the heavy stage lurched, the seven occupants were smashed up against each other. Egan had tried to make up his mind to jump. He had reached for the door twice, but each time Bennett had pulled him back, telling him a leap was sure death. Owens and Penny were gibbering at each other. Brofman was praying. Feeney, of the miners' committee, was white as a ghost. He was braced in the corner of one seat, waiting for the crash he was sure must come.

"Ef we run over the cliff," whined Feeney, "we'll drap a good two hundred feet—they wont need to bury us. But ef we smash inter the mountain side, on the inside o' the road—"

"By heavens," roared Owens, hearing that, and he poked his head out into the night again. The wind tore at him. Tears came to his eyes. He twisted his head around and shouted to Dad.

"You—driver up there!" cried Owens. "Head her into the mountain side—wreck the outfit! We'll take our chances—may kill a few mules, but they oughter be killed. Head her in—"

DAD STEWART, riding high and triumphant with loose reins, grinned a ghastly smile. He was thoroughly enjoying this wild ride. His foot rested on the brake, but there was no pressure. He heard the agonized command of Owens as if it had been a voice from the clouds.

"Sorry," cried Dad shrilly. "I kain't try that, sir—seem' I have six cases o' dynamite aboard—"

"Dynamite!" screamed Owens; and then he collapsed, and hung part way out the narrow stage window, until Egan pulled him in. Old Dad chuckled to himself. Since Owens' greed had spoiled the Fourth of July for him and his mules, and likewise threatened the very existence of Gunsight, he had no scruples against giving the coachful a thrill or two. He pitied Egan and Feeney and Bennett, the poor miners' committeemen, but he knew their hearts were strong enough to stand the shock. He wanted to scare Owens and Penny and Brofman and Clark, the pampered, selfish mine operators.

"Hey you, Blackie—an' you, Nigger!" screamed Dad in a delirium of excitement. "Oh, you Night—oh, you Tar Baby—an' ol' Satan—an' ol' Darky—oh, you mules!"

The hitch went forward at renewed speed. They were a good halfway down the mountain grade by this time. The coach was rumbling on the heels of the wheelers. Voices came in snatches from the inside of the stage—praying voices! Old Dad could not distinguish any words, except once, when he heard Owens cry, "But I want to get out of this mess—I got to go to Europe!" And Dad grinned at Egan's reply: "It looks to me, sir—like we're all goin' to th' same place in a hurry—an' it aint Europe!" After that the prayers came in a steady stream, and in such volume that old Dad was afforded unlimited opportunity to yell encouragement to the mules.

THE mules were having a splendid time.

The leaders were flattened out like jack-rabbits, fairly skimming the road. The swing team might have been a pair of grayhounds in pursuit of the rabbits. The wheelers were running with less assurance and more worries. The heavy coach was right on their heels, and they had no desire to be run down. Old Dad enthroned on his driver's seat, swung the whip and shook out the reins and shouted words of cheer to Nigger and Blackie and Tar Baby and the rest. They were traveling *some*. If they could have shown this speed at the rodeo, thought Dad miserably, they would have made history for old Gunsight! He looked tenderly at the fleeing black shadows that were the wheelers; then his glance lifted and went on to the swaying backs of the swing team, then to the backs of the leaders, and then—

"Great jumpin' tadpoles!" exclaimed Dad suddenly, as he saw a lantern blinking at him out of the night, and he jammed down on the brake, at the same moment hauling in on the reins. The leaders had been worrying about that light for a long minute before Dad had seen it. So they were ready. They slowed up instantly. The swing team ran up on them and snarled the traces. The wheelers skidded to a mad halt. The stage slowed, stopped—to the tune of the screeching brake. Dad wrapped the lines around the whip-socket and started down over the side of his coach.

"Thank God!" cried Eddie Owens, the first man to stagger out of the coach. "You

Gunsight Forever

finally stopped 'em, driver—did a damn' fine piece o' work—yes sir! I'll see you are rewarded for this—you were cool as a cucumber—all the way through. I never thought yuh could stop 'em—I figgered we were goners."

"Dad, I'm here to thank you!" blubbered Tom Egan, emerging on Owens' heels. "I figgered we was headed fer Kingdom Come sure—I prayed—we all prayed—we fergot our troubles."

"See here, men," said Eddie Owens, wiping his dripping forehead with his handkerchief, "I've changed my mind about that wage increase! I was thinking, there in the coach, how foolish we were to argue like we had! Life is too short for such nonsense. I have all the money I need, I guess—an' probably the miners do need more—theirs is a hard life, anyway. I think, Penny, that we should accept the committee's compromise."

"Anything—suits—me!" groaned Floyd Penny, the lawyer, as he lurched out of the stage. "I'm—glad—I'm—alive!"

The men shook hands at that, all around. Smiles began to light up the white faces. Egan slapped Owens on the back, and Owens retaliated by giving Egan a fat black cigar. Dad blew his nose with suspicious earnestness and went up ahead, to discover that the lantern meant a broken-down lumber wagon in the road. He came back and spoke softly to his leaders, Nigger and Blackie.

"Good work, fellers!" he said, stroking the warm noses. "Never git so funny that you fergit to obey when I says to stop; ef you weren't dang smart mules, my little joke might have turned inter a real accident! Nice ol' Blackie, nice ol' Nigger!"

Owens came up to him.

"Driver," he said, crisply, but not unkindly, "tell your superintendent that we must sell these mules; you did a miracle to-night, driver, but—"

"Sell these mules!" cried old Dad wildly. "Why, Mr. Owens, these are the six best, fastest mules on the line—I had 'em entered in th' Event Number Eleven at the Central City rodeo tomorrow, the Fourth o' July—in the event fer racing stage-coaches—I was goin' to uphold the honor o' ol' Gunsight—"

Owens grasped the old man's hand.

"Well, ol'-timer!" said Owens heartily. "Gunsight is lucky in havin' you. If you've nerve enough to drive those mules again, I guess there's no doubt about who'll win!"

NOT FOR SALE

By

LEMUEL DE BRA

A tensely interesting tale of Chinatown and the underworld, by the former Federal officer who gave us "Tears of the Poppy" and "Evil Treasure."

Illustrated by

William Molt

"WELL, there's the lay," concluded Spot Carney, lowering his voice cautiously. "We can put the whole thing over in less than a week and split forty grand. We—"

"Grand what?" rumbled Big Jim Toy, poking his huge fingers through his shock of graying black hair.

Spot Carney, known from Limehouse to Barbary Coast as the "Blarney Kid," blew a stream of smoke at the open window that looked out on San Francisco's Chinatown. A smile softened his sharp, white face.

"A 'grand' is a thousand dollars, Toy. We split forty thousand dollars. For about a week's work. See? Easy pickings; but we have to play careful. We're going up against one of the shrewdest swindlers unhung. He doesn't work at it now, but that's how he got rich. As for the woman, I can handle her. She's too pretty to have anything more than an empty space back of her plucked eyebrows. You—"

"I'm afraid of women," Big Jim Toy interrupted, his broad saffron face expressionless. "I neither steal from them nor— for them."

"I've done both," chuckled the Blarney Kid. "Don't worry about that. I'll handle my end. What about yours?"

Big Jim took a cigarette from his lacquered box and thoughtfully lighted it. In all the years that he had made a living by his wits he had tricked many white men,



Before Fong could struggle, something struck his head a crushing blow.

but he had steadfastly refused to share his tricks with them. Not so long ago he had swindled this man who now sat before him, tricked him neatly out of four valuable diamonds. Now that Spot Carney had come to him with a proposition that they work together, Big Jim was torn between suspicion of the white crook and greed to share in the forty thousand.

Suddenly he looked up. "Say," he said sharply, "are you superstitious?"

SPOT CARNEY raised his slim, well-kept hands and carefully adjusted his tie. "Of course not," he said, smiling. "Are you? And why—"

"All Chinese are superstitious," said Big Jim. "Do you know the story of 'Youth and the Two Goddesses?' No? Well, then, you'd better know what danger we're facing. Yesterday"—he opened a drawer and got out a small paper-bound book—"after you left, I sent out for this. It's a catalog of old Chinese porcelain. As I understand it, you haven't even seen the pieces that this rich white man owns. Huh?"

"That's right. But everyone has heard of them. And everyone who knows Flashy Sam Searcy has heard him describe them. He's always bragging about his stuff."

"If he could complete this set he would have a right to brag," said Big Jim, shoving the book across the desk to the white man and indicating, with a long fingernail, a certain set. "Nobody knows how old it is, but it's worth a fortune."

Spot Carney was staring at the picture. The set consisted of three pieces; a vase in the center, a statue of Fuchien white on each side. The statues were of young Chinese maids, appealingly beautiful and, so far as Spot could see, precisely alike.

The startling thing about the set was the face on the centerpiece. This was of a young man. Done in the early spirit of the Ming—rich colors on a background of cobalt-blue—the youth's eyes were gazing in opposite directions: one at the "Goddess of Heavenly Virtue" and one at the "Goddess of Evil Desire," while his face mirrored doubt and desire, determination and deep longing. The effect was uncanny, startling.

"You see the point, of course," rumbled Big Jim. "In the eyes of youth everything that is beautiful is good. He has been warned that one is evil, the other good; but to him they are alike, both desirable. Now what I want to know is this: since these two figures are exactly alike, how does this

white man know that the one he has is the '*Goddess of Evil Desire*'?"

Slowly Spot Carney looked up from the picture. There was a queer expression on his face, a hint of fear in his eyes.

"That's an astonishing thing, Toy! I didn't take any stock in the story; but now I wonder. You see, a wealthy collector in London owned the whole set. He caught his secretary stealing and discharged him. In retaliation, the secretary swiped the two Fuchien white statues. He didn't take the vase because he couldn't get out of the house without it being seen. He sold one of the figures for a trifling sum; and that figure, evidently the '*Goddess of Heavenly Virtue*,' has never been heard of since.

"But the other! In less than a week, in a violent quarrel over some trifling matter, the secretary was shot and killed by his wife. She took the statue and everything else of value and fled to Paris where she was stabbed to death and robbed of everything. Months later, when the statue was returned to its owner, he knew from the trail of bloodshed it had left that—"

"That it was the '*Goddess of Evil Desire*'" rumbled Big Jim, his eyes wide and glowing like burnished bronze. "Of course! Not for all the money in the world would I touch the thing—unless I had the vase or the other statue to go with it. It's harmless then. But alone—ugh!" Big Jim shuddered. "I suppose your scheme is to use a copy and sell it to Searcy as the long-lost '*Goddess of Heavenly Virtue*?' Well, there would be no danger in that. But how do you know Searcy will pay all that money for the missing figure?"

"Because he has advertised for years that he will. When he heard the story of the broken set, and the trail of violent death left by the statue that came back to its London owner, he thought he saw a good chance to advertise himself and his collection. So he bought the broken set and immediately offered twenty thousand dollars for the return of the missing statue. Since then he has doubled the offer. He'll pay, all right; but he is tricky. We'll have to watch him, and we'll have to sell only for spot cash. As for risks, you can play pretty safe. Ah Fong can run the store; and your entire outlay needn't be over two or three hundred dollars. Me—I'm risking everything. If there's any slip, it means prison for life. Habitual criminal, you know," finished the Blarney Kid, smiling.

"I think the game is safe enough since

we don't have to touch that '*Goddess of Evil Desire*,'" rumbled Big Jim, reaching for another cigarette. "The Chinese superstition is that even to think of that wicked goddess fills the mind with greed and treachery and everything evil."

"I don't doubt it," said Spot Carney.

FLASHY Sam Searcy took an instant liking to the good-looking, immaculately dressed young man whom he had observed the past two nights at Louie's exclusive bootlegging parlors. Chancing to overhear the young man remark to another patron that he represented the Great Britain Oriental Antique Company, Searcy made his way to the young man's side.

"So you're in the antique line, eh?" Searcy interrupted, thrusting out a huge, be-diamonded hand. "Glad to know you, young man! My name's Searcy—guess you've heard—"

"Have I heard the name?" echoed the young man quickly setting down his glass. "I fancy I have, old chap! Who hasn't? Among the trade, I mean, of course. I'm Gerald Westingfall. Wont you join me?"

"Yes; but not here," Searcy said quietly. "Let's take a booth. I want to talk with you."

There was a pause while the waiter served drinks; then for half an hour the two men talked. The Blarney Kid, in his time, had played many parts; and it was his pride that whatever he undertook to do, he did well. Knowing that Flashy Sam Searcy had only a showy smattering of the deep subject of ceramics, Spot Carney had prepared himself in a few days to talk glibly of "biscuit," "patina," "glaze," "celadon," and of the various porcelain periods.

"By the way, Searcy," he remarked over the third drink, "I saw a most interesting copy today. Figure of a Chinese maiden in Fuchien white. The owner claims it is an original and keeps it locked in a strong case. Says it is the famous '*Goddess of Heavenly Virtue*' and that it brings him good luck. I couldn't examine it closely, but of course it's only a copy. The Chink who runs the store is mighty shrewd, but I fancy he never heard the story of how the '*Goddess of Heavenly Virtue*' was lost."

Slowly, Flashy Sam set down his glass. He made an obvious attempt to keep his voice natural.

"What does the owner ask for the figure?"

"He said it wasn't for sale." Spot Car-



Spot Carney suddenly stiffened. "Keep your hands right there!" Big Jim ordered savagely. "—All right, Mr. Blodgett!"

ney glanced at his wrist-watch. "By Jove, I must be on my way! I didn't realize how late—"

"Have one more, Mr. Westingfall! How about a little old vermouth with it this time?" Searcy signaled the waiter and gave the order. "You know I haven't been in Chinatown for some time. New shop there, you say? I might drop in some time. Who has the place?"

"Mr. Westingfall" frowned thoughtfully. He couldn't recall the name of the proprietor. But he could give Mr. Searcy the location, and he did.

EARLY next afternoon, powdered and pomaded, his hat set jauntily on his graying hair, a purple pansy in the lapel of his checked gray coat, Flashy Sam Searcy strolled down Chinatown's main thoroughfare, turned into a side-street and presently stopped to gaze at the *objets d'art* in a small display window. Big Jim Toy had borrowed these from a trusted friend just as he had borrowed everything Searcy found inside the small, partly furnished shop. Even the two elegantly dressed women examining Cantonese drapes were "plants." The three clerks, making a pretense of cleaning the still empty shelves and counters, and the gorgeously painted and jeweled Chinese girl in native costume had been borrowed from Big Jim Toy's regular force.

Searcy's first impression of exclusiveness

was deepened as he strolled through the shop. What few things had been put on display were of the very best. And with many of them was a card, reading:

PRICELESS ANTIQUE
NOT FOR SALE

"Huh!" muttered Flashy Sam as he paused in front of a small locked case. "No ignorant Chink runs this joint. Ah!"

Inside the case, on a stand of rich black velvet, against a background of the same material, was the snowy-white Fuchien statue. So far as Searcy could see, it was not merely a duplicate but a replica of the Fuchien white statue he kept locked in its case in his library. And at the foot of the figure was that card: "*Priceless Antique—Not for Sale.*"

Searcy beckoned to a clerk. "Here's my card," he said curtly. "Send the proprietor here."

The clerk bowed and vanished back of a stand-screen at the rear of the shop, returning presently to say that Mr. Fong was busy but would be out in a few minutes.

After a ten-minute wait, Mr. Fong appeared. He was a middle-aged man with a pleasant face, the dreamy eyes of a student and a broad forehead topped by a pompadour of gray hair. He wore Chinese slippers but his clothes were American.

"This thing here," spoke up Searcy bluntly; "tell me about it."

Mr. Fong clasped his hands and bowed slightly. In a carefully modulated voice he

said he was sorry, very sorry, but the little goddess was not for sale.

"Where'd you get it?" pursued Searcy.

"Ah, that is an interesting story!" beamed Fong. "That figure was among my father's treasures when he died in London some years ago. On inquiry I learned that he had bought it from a white man who had stolen it. I located the counselor for the rightful owner and was told that he did not want the figure as he had sold the rest of the set to an American millionaire. So I kept it. It is, as you, of course, can see, the '*Goddess of Heavenly Virtue*.' And it has brought me success, prosperity. I could not part with it."

"You'd part with it for five thousand dollars, wouldn't you?"

Mr. Fong shook his head, smiling. "Not for ten times that, sir."

Searcy considered a moment.

"Say, you know James W. Grenneth?" he demanded.

"The Oriental expert? I have heard of him, of course; but I have been in San Francisco only a short time and—"

"I'm going to bring him down here," Searcy cut in. "Within an hour. I want him to see that, to *feel* it. If it's genuine, I'm going to buy it. Price doesn't matter. You understand?"

Mr. Fong looked blank; then, suddenly his bronze eyes lighted with comprehension.

"Can it be possible, sir, that you—that you know where the rest of the set is?"

"Certainly I know!" snapped Flashy Sam Searcy. "It's locked up in my library at my home in Berkeley!"

"*Kuai!*" exclaimed Mr. Fong, smiling. He was still smiling when the door closed behind Flashy Sam; then, a troubled look in his eyes, he scurried to the back of the shop, tapped a signal on a locked door, and was admitted to the presence of Spot Carney and Big Jim Toy.

"I was afraid he might bring Grenneth," muttered the Blarney Kid when Fong had repeated his conversation with Searcy. "Grenneth might queer our game; but it's a chance we have to take. A good imitation would fool Searcy; but I doubt if it will trick Grenneth."

"That imitation would deceive almost anyone," rumbled Big Jim. "Where'd you pick that up?"

"In a shop in Mazatlan, Mexico."

"Why couldn't Grenneth have been—ah—fixed?" asked Big Jim.

Spot Carney shook his head. "Gren-

neth's reputation as an honest expert is worth more than any sum you could offer him. No, we have to play the cards as they fall. Fong, when Grenneth comes you must be careful not to say that the figure is genuine; you must say only that you have been told it is. Tell him frankly that it may be only a copy; but that whatever it is, the figure is not for sale. Understand?"

"I understand only that I don't like this affair," Fong answered. "I have the feeling that there is trouble ahead. There's something about that statue that—"

GRENNETH did not come until about noon. He was a smallish man with tight lips and keen gray eyes. Apparently he made no attempt to hide his dislike for Searcy, but he looked at the Fuchien figure with astonished pleasure. He listened without comment to Mr. Fong's story, examined the statue carefully, felt it with the tips of his sensitive fingers, then put it back in the case.

"Is that what you are prepared to pay forty thousand dollars for?" he asked.

"I am—if it's genuine," Searcy replied.

Grenneth shrugged his shoulders. "A purely artificial price; just as a *prunus* jar sold recently in London for thirty thousand dollars. But then your set, in itself, is an oddity. The vase you have is ancient Ming; the two statues that go with it are of later Fuchien white. Just when they were combined, we do not know; but many ancient Chinese books contain references to the set '*Youth and the Two Goddesses*.' But I do not like to see such things fall into the hands of speculators or men whose only interest is to show off their wealth. Such things should be in a museum where all may enjoy—"

"I didn't ask for a lecture!" Searcy cut in sharply; "I'm paying you for your opinion. Is that a genuine antique, or is it a fake?"

Grenneth's eyes flashed. "Since you are going to buy it, I am sorry to have to say that it is genuine."

"Genuine!" echoed Searcy. "Good! Send me your bill, Grenneth. Mr. Fong, I'm ready to talk business with you."

Grenneth left.

"Mr. Fong," said Searcy, "for years I've had a standing offer of forty thousand dollars for the missing figure. And I'll pay it."

Mr. Fong hesitated. He glanced in the

direction of the little white goddess, and sighed.

"It breaks my heart to do it; but, in the interests of art, I'll help you complete your set. The figure is yours."

"All right; now listen!" Flashy Sam Searcy lowered his voice. "I have a little scheme. I am going to make out a check payable to you for fifty thousand dollars and have it certified. I want you to endorse that check and give it back to me to put through the bank. I want that paid check to use as proof that I paid fifty thousand for the statue. Get me?"

"I—ah—believe that has been done," smiled Mr. Fong.

"Of course. All right! You bring that statue to my office—the address is on my card—at eight o'clock tonight. I'll have the check ready for you to endorse; and I'll have the forty thousand in currency to hand over to you for the statue. And of course you'll bring a bill of sale."

"Of course. I'll see you at eight."

FONG remained at the table until Searcy had gone; then he hastened to the back room. Spot Carney heard the news calmly, but Big Jim was elated—and astounded.

"Grenneth says it's genuine!" he rumbled, staring hard at Carney. "What does that mean?"

"Simply that another expert has made a mistake," replied Carney.

"Or that, after all, he had his price," growled Big Jim. "Whichever it is, we win. On the other hand, I've been thinking. Many things from England find their way eventually to Mexico. I wonder—"

"I wonder why Searcy didn't go to the bank, get the money, come back and take the damned thing and have it over," Carney broke in impatiently. "Why does he make us wait until night, and then take it to his office? And who'll you send?"

"Fong," replied Big Jim. "I'd trust him with anything—or any sum—any time."

Spot Carney grunted. He flipped out a cigarette, tapped it thoughtfully on his thumbnail, and struck a match. The instant Mr. Fong left the room, Carney said quietly:

"But forty thousand is a lot of money, Toy! Something just might happen to Fong on his way back. We'd better send a guard."

"Ah, yes!" Big Jim smiled knowingly. "I see your point. You may choose the guard."

"I know just the bird for that job," concluded Spot Carney, rising. "Now I—I want to talk with Fong a minute."

Ten minutes later the Blarney Kid was in his room conversing in a whisper with his roommate, Gat Gaynor.

"At first, I intended to play square," Spot told the little gunman; "but the more I think of it the more I think I'd be a fool to split with the Chink. So here's the lay. You tail Fong and watch him. I'll be waiting in the back room with Big Jim. When you and Fong come back—the minute you two are in the room—we'll stick up the Chinks, grab the forty grand, and blow. See?"

About that same time, Big Jim Toy was in his private office talking with Detective Joe Blodgett.

"Yes, I admit that I had a little deal on with Carney; but I'm scared out. And the easiest and safest way for me to get clear is for you to put Carney where he belongs. The reward, of course, all goes to you."

Detective Blodgett grinned. "You'll be safe enough, all right! Carney goes to stir for the rest o' his life. An' I'm tellin' you straight, Toy, I think you're as big a crook as he is. I'll bet ten bucks you're turnin' him so you can hog the whole loot. But—I want Carney, an' I can use the reward. So I'll play your game—this time. What's the lay?"

Big Jim wrote something on a piece of paper. "Be at that address at seven sharp. I'll hide you. Shortly afterward Carney will arrive with another white man. At seven-forty-five, that white man will leave with one of my men. As soon as they've gone, I'll pull a gun on Carney and call you. You must handcuff Carney and take him away at once."

SAM SEARCY dined alone that evening—something very unusual for him. His pretty wife was dressing to go out—something very unusual for her. And Searcy was worried. Something certainly had come over "Babe" the past few days.

His dinner over, Searcy lighted a cigar and strolled into the library. His steps brought him shortly to where a locked glass case stood on top of a mahogany cabinet. For a moment Searcy stood there smoking thoughtfully while his gaze dwelt on the contents of the case—a Ming vase and a single Fuchien white statuette.

Presently Searcy stepped to a bookcase, took out a book, reached a hand in the

aperture and got out a key. Unlocking the glass case he took out the white figure and gazed at it proudly—not with the pride of the connoisseur but with the pride of one who loves display.

"You won't be alone much longer," he exclaimed, setting the figure back. "I'll have your mate—"

Abruptly Searcy choked off. For a moment he stared at the figure, his face tense; then, muttering a curse, he rushed to the telephone. Twenty minutes later, in response to much urging and the promise of a fifty-dollar fee, Grenneth was in the library.

"Certainly this Fuchien white is genuine," he told Searcy, as he examined the little goddess. "I've told you that several times."

"I know you have," growled Searcy; "also I know there are a lot of tricks in this game. Thanks for running over. And pardon me for rushing you off. I have an appointment in the city."

Grenneth, with the fifty-dollar fee in his pocket, apparently didn't regret having to leave. Searcy put the little goddess back, locked the case, and restored the key to its hiding place. Without bothering to send word to Mrs. Searcy, still in her room, Flashy Sam hurried out.

Forty minutes later he was in his San Francisco office. Standing beside Searcy's desk, twisting his cap nervously, was a white-faced youth whose dark eyes burned with a look of mingled fear and hate.

"But you told me that other job would be the last!" he was saying. "I'm goin' straight now. The cops aint got nothin' on me. I—"

"You'll do this one last job or I'll see that your wife and your employers find out what a dirty low-down jail-bird you are!" Searcy cut in savagely. "The Chink will be here at eight sharp. When he leaves he'll have a small wad of money that belongs to me. You get it—the same way you did the other time—and bring it right back here. I'll slip you a couple of centuries—and never bother you again."

"That's what you always say. You—"

"All right," growled Searcy. "If you don't want—"

"Oh, I'll do it," the youth spoke up bitterly. "You've got me, an' you know it. But—it's hell."

"It will be if you try any funny business," Searcy threatened. He opened a drawer and got out a blackjack. "Take

this paralyzer and do a good job. And don't let the whole world see you sneaking back here, either!"

Snub Willitts took the paralyzer and concealed it beneath his coat. He started to say something but checked himself, turned on his heel and left.

AT seven o'clock Mr. Fong put his pipe away, donned his slippers and his street hat. He stepped to the table where his third wife, a pretty girl of nineteen whom Fong had recently married, sat crying.

"Do not weep now, Little One," he said in cautious Cantonese. "Afterward, the more you shed tears the better. When anyone asks for me, you must cry and say: 'I know nothing—only that he is gone.' You understand?"

"Yes, honorable husband," said the young woman chokingly.

"Years have I worked for Toy," went on Fong. "I helped make him rich. He has been good to me; and never before have I thought of dealing dishonestly with him. These past few days something has come over me, something I cannot resist. I am going through with it—and then I shall be rich. At the proper time I shall send for you; but now you must think only of what I ask you to do."

"Take my bag and go to the Ferry Station. Buy me a ticket to Sacramento. Put the ticket inside the bag, then check it at the newsstand. Do not take the check they will offer you, but explain that your—your father will call for it at about ten minutes after eight. I plan to catch the eight-twenty boat. Do you hear?"

"Hi low, honorable husband. And I will do as you say. But—I'm afraid!"

BIG JIM TOY was alone in the back room when Spot Carney arrived—alone. Big Jim closed the door, then gave Carney a sharp look. "Where is the guard?" he demanded quietly.

"He's on the job," Carney replied, smiling. "You didn't mention him to Fong?"

"Certainly not!" said Big Jim. "Neither did I tell him that I have a man waiting to keep an eye on *your* friend. The stake is too big to take any chance."

"Quite right!" chuckled Carney. "It's fine that we have such confidence in each other. Only that I was afraid of making Searcy suspicious, I would have insisted that he pay over the money right here in

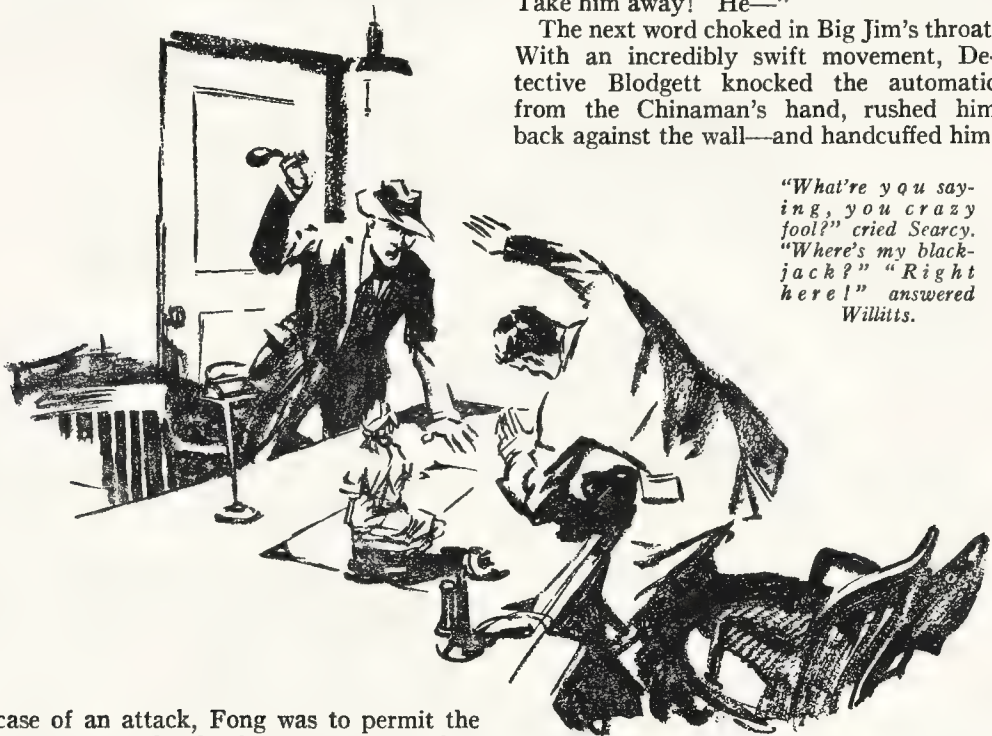
this shop. Well, we have to play the cards as they fall. Let's get things ready for Mr. Fong."

When Fong arrived there were two small parcels lying on the table between Big Jim and the white man. The one containing the statuette he concealed beneath his coat. The dummy package he was to carry in his hand. Big Jim explained quietly that in

the handcuffs snapped over his wrists. "I guess you know what this means, Carney," said Blodgett, searching his prisoner. "It's curtains for the Blarney Kid this time. O-ho!" He found Carney's loaded automatic and slipped it in his own pocket.

"I didn't know until this afternoon who he is!" declared Big Jim excitedly. "Now I know he's been scheming to rob me. Take him away! He—"

The next word choked in Big Jim's throat. With an incredibly swift movement, Detective Blodgett knocked the automatic from the Chinaman's hand, rushed him back against the wall—and handcuffed him.



"What're you saying, you crazy fool?" cried Searcy. "Where's my black-jack?" "Right here!" answered Willitts.

case of an attack, Fong was to permit the attackers to take the dummy package; then he was to hurry on to Searcy's office.

Mr. Fong nodded that he understood. Smiling, he bowed to the two men, and left.

Big Jim twisted in his chair. "Well, Mr. Carney," he said, raising his voice, "while we're waiting, let's have a smoke. I have a box of good Havanas—" He opened the box and shoved it across the table.

Unsuspecting, Spot Carney took a cigar. He started to slip off the band, but suddenly stiffened. Just above the edge of the table, Big Jim had flashed an automatic.

"Keep your hands right there!" Big Jim ordered savagely, rising. Keeping at a safe distance from the white man, he passed around the table and opened the door. "All right, Mr. Blodgett!" he called out.

Detective Joe Blodgett came on the run. Spot Carney was still holding the cigar in one hand and the band in the other when

"There, you big crook!" he cried, shoving Big Jim into a chair. "I'm goin' to take Carney, all right; but you're damned anxious for me to get Carney out o' here before your man comes back. What's he bringin' back? Eh? We'll wait right here an' find out!"

THERE was a tense silence, Big Jim staring open-mouthed at the detective and Spot Carney gazing narrow-eyed at the Chinaman. Then, suddenly, the Blarney Kid threw back his head—and laughed.

"What's the joke?" growled Detective Blodgett. "An' who's it on?"

"On almost everyone—except you," chuckled the Blarney Kid. "You wait a few minutes—until I'm sure the deal has gone through—and I'll tell you."

"You going to squeal, huh?" rumbled Big Jim angrily. "You going to squeal?"

"Sure! Just like you squealed on me. Say, Toy, what put that idea into your head?"

"I dunno," growled Big Jim.

"Struck me funny," put in Detective Blodgett. "Everybody knows that Big Jim is a crook; but he's never before been a double-crosser."

"Queer," muttered Carney, staring hard at Big Jim. "Maybe you'll be interested in hearing that I had the same idea in my head—that is, I was going to stick you up and take the whole loot."

"Huh?" shouted Big Jim, bending over the table open-mouthed. "Why, you—"

"That's a new stunt for you, too, Carney," put in Blodgett. "You're a crook; but you got the rep. o' bein' a square crook. What is this racket, anyway?"

The Blarney Kid stretched out his manacled hands. "Light a cigar for me and I'll tell you," he said; and Blodgett hastened to comply. For a few minutes Carney smoked thoughtfully. He appeared to be waiting.

Then, briefly, without mentioning names, he told the detective of their swindling scheme.

"By this time," he concluded, "the deal has gone through. One of the biggest swindlers unhung has been neatly tricked. He has paid forty thousand dollars for *his own piece of porcelain*, for the little white '*Goddess of Evil Desire*'"

In a dead silence Big Jim Toy leaned over the table, his slant eyes wide and staring.

"Fact, Toy!" chuckled Carney. "Those pieces of Fuchien white are mighty rare now; but back in the thirteenth century, when the Roman Catholic Church was sending its missionaries to Japan, that little white god was a great favorite. The Chinese had a name for her as long as your arm; but the Catholic missionaries used the statuette in Japan as a figure of the Virgin Mary. Seems incredible, but it's history."

"Well, I happened to pick up one of those figures in Mazatlan, just as I told you. I bought it for what it was—a copy; but it gave me the idea of tricking Flashy Sam. I knew that no ordinary game would fool him; so I planned carefully. Before Searcy retired I had met Babe Searcy and knew that I could talk business with her. I blarneyed her into thinking that I had a chance to clean up big by swindling a rich Chinaman. I showed her my phony statuette; and for a thousand dollars, and the

promise of another grand, she slipped me Searcy's genuine figure and put my phony in its place. Then—"

"Then!" shouted Big Jim, "that—that thing we had out there—that I handled—that Fong handled—that was—"

"That was the '*Goddess of Evil Desire*.' I knew your fool superstition, Toy; and I knew I didn't dare tell you the truth. I even let you think that Grenneth might declare the statuette phony. But, at that, Grenneth worried me. When I told you this afternoon that I wanted to talk with Fong, I went out there and took the statuette—as you found out later. I gave it to Gat Gaynor who hustled over to Berkeley with it. Mrs. Searcy put it in its case. If Searcy got suspicious and had the figure examined there by Grenneth, he got fooled again. The minute Searcy left the house, Mrs. Searcy slipped Gat the figure again and he brought it over to me."

"There's the whole story, Blodgett," concluded Carney.

"*Aih-yah!*" cried Big Jim in sudden panic. "You have ruined everything! Fong—everyone who looked on that little white goddess of evil—are plotting against us! That '*Goddess of Evil Desire*—"

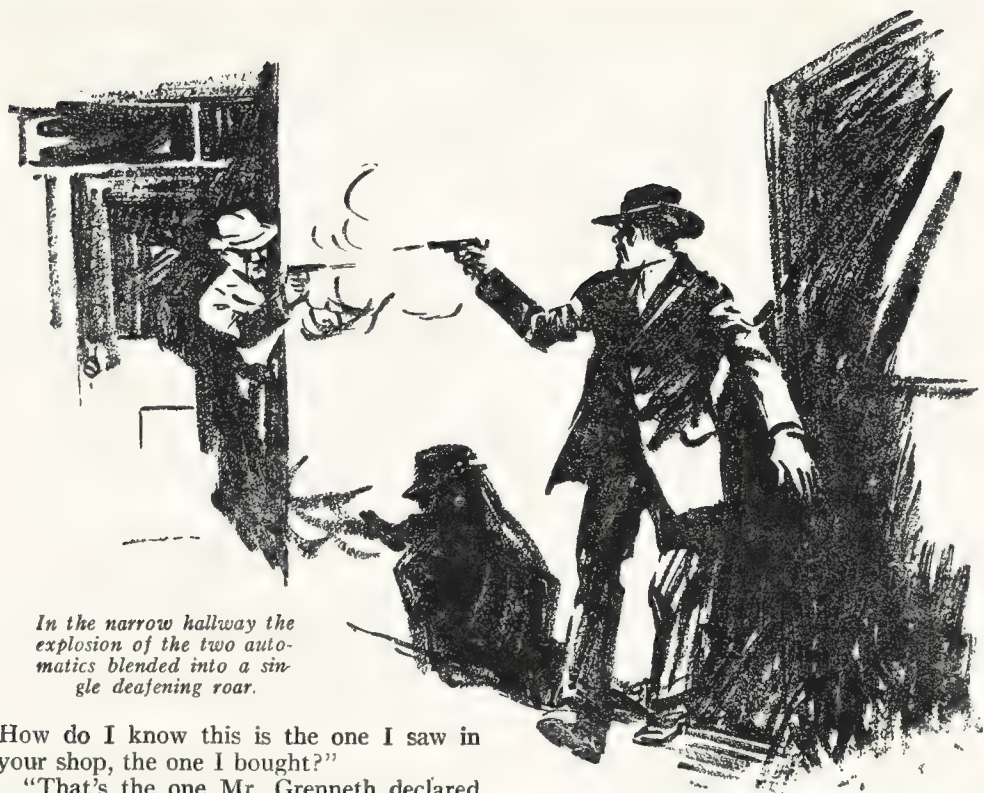
With startling suddenness, some one tapped with his nails on the back door. Detective Blodgett sprang up to open it.

ALTHOUGH Sam Searcy had, himself, of late years, been keeping within the law, his natural inclination had led him to select a suite of offices in a building with no night elevator service but with several stairways and convenient roofs. Fong, suspecting that he might be watched, had looked the building over and had made his plans. Now he kept his gaze straight ahead, took the direct course to Searcy's building, went in the main entrance and up the public stairway. He tapped with his nails on Searcy's door. Searcy admitted him—and locked the door again.

"Well," said Flashy Sam nervously, "you didn't see anyone following you, did you? Anyone hanging around?"

"No," said Fong, his gaze on Searcy's big diamond ring; "everything is all right. There, you see, is the little goddess, and the bill of sale made out for fifty thousand dollars, and signed. Also I will now endorse your certified check."

"Correct!" Searcy got out the check and handed Fong his fountain pen. "Hope you're not trying to swindle me with a fake."



In the narrow hallway the explosion of the two automatics blended into a single deafening roar.

How do I know this is the one I saw in your shop, the one I bought?"

"That's the one Mr. Grenneth declared was genuine," said Fong, unruffled. "I wish I had an imitation piece as good as that. And," he went on as Searcy opened a drawer and got out a pack of bills, "I hope your money is as good as my Fuchien figure!"

Searcy laughed nervously. "It's O. K.," he said. "Count it."

Fong's slim brown fingers went through the money rapidly. "The sum is correct," he remarked indifferently. He folded the stack of bills and thrust them in an inside pocket. "You must come and see my shop often, Mr. Searcy. I have a shipment of very fine Kang-he work coming in that will interest you."

"I'll drop in now and then," Searcy told him, toying nervously with the statue.

"Thank you. Good night, Mr. Searcy."

"Good night, Mr. Fong," said Searcy. He watched Fong go out, saw the door close. The Fuchien white statuette in one hand. Searcy sat motionless, listening.

FONG glanced toward the public stairway then turned in the opposite direction. Unsuspecting, he passed close to the dark doorway of Searcy's private office—and a hand shot out, gripped him by the throat. Before he could cry out or struggle, something struck his head a crushing blow.

Silently, Snub Willitts eased the uncon-

scious Chinese to the floor. Hiding the paralyzer beneath his coat, he searched Fong, taking the pack of bills and everything else of value. Then he crowded the body back against Searcy's private door, waited a moment, then walked down the hall and tapped on the glass. Searcy admitted him—and locked the door again.

"You got here damned quick," growled Searcy.

"I'm a fast worker," retorted Snub. "I caught him at the head of the East Street stairs, tapped him on the bean, got the dough, then took him out the window over the garage roof an' dropped him in the alley. He won't be found until morning."

"Good!" exclaimed Searcy as Willitts tossed the pack of bills on the desk. "Did you swipe any of this money?"

"Searcy," said Snub Willitts quietly, "I have never been a crook. I made a mistake once, an' paid for it with four years in stir. But even them four years o' hell didn't make a crook out o' me. I've done your dirty work because you forced me to do it. You're determined to make a crook out o' me. All right, I'll be a crook; an' I'll start—"

"What're you saying, you crazy fool?" cried Searcy, starting to rise. "And say, where's my blackjack?"

"Right here!" answered Snub Willitts, and brought the ten-ounce paralyzer crashing down on Searcy's head. Searcy heaved over across his desk. Groaning, he tried to rise—and Willitts struck again.

As he struck, Searcy's head rolled to one side. The blackjack tore past his right ear and struck the statuette that lay on the desk, smashing it to bits.

The noise of the crashing porcelain struck Willitts with panic. Frantically he rained blows on Searcy's head until Searcy lay inert. Then, suddenly cool, Willitts flung down the blackjack, took from his pockets everything he had taken from Fong, and concealed the stuff in Searcy's pockets.

He picked up the stack of bills. "This," he said to the unconscious Searcy, "is pay for the hell you've put me through all these years. With this money—if I don't hang for bumpin' you off—I can keep straight."

He started for the door, then abruptly turned back to Searcy's desk, opened a drawer and took out an automatic. Releasing the catch, he slipped the gun in his coat pocket but kept his hand on it. With his left hand he punched out the lights and opened the hall door.

One glance toward the main stairway and Snub Willitts stopped short. In the gloom beyond the stairway he saw a black felt hat, a broad, dark face, and the gleam of slant eyes. His knees trembling, Willitts hurried in the opposite direction—past the doorway where he had left the unconscious Fong.

Out of that doorway came a sharp but cautious order: "Stop, you!"

With a choking gasp, Snub Willitts wheeled, jumped backward and jerked the automatic from his pocket.

Mat Gaynor was a gunman. To him, the fact that the other man had drawn his gun after being ordered to stop, meant only one thing: that he had to fight.

In the narrow hallway the explosion of the two automatics blended into a single deafening roar.

AS Detective Blodgett opened that back door he stepped back with an astonished exclamation. Into the room strode Sergeant Merriman and two patrolmen.

"What in heck are you doing here?" demanded Merriman, staring at Blodgett. Then he caught sight of Spot Carney in handcuffs, and swore excitedly. "And Big Jim, too! Say, Blodgett, what the devil does this mean, anyway?"

"You tell me what brought you here, Sergeant," suggested Blodgett; "then I'll tell you what you don't know."

Merriman turned to one of the patrolmen. "Go tell the boys out front that everything is jake." Then to Blodgett: "Somebody heard a shooting scrape in the Jertzner Building. I happened to be in the pool-hall just across the street. When I got there with Hughes"—indicating the patrolman beside him—"we found several things.

"In the hall, in front of Flashy Sam Searcy's door was a Chink named Fong. He had been blackjacked or hit with a gun. He is at the emergency hospital, but will probably live.

"Close beside him was a white man, dying. He had been shot. He couldn't talk much but I got out of him that he had planned to rob the Chink.

"In the office, Flashy Sam Searcy lay across his desk, also dying. Somebody had about brained him with a blackjack. He may live—and mebbe the other white man may live—but their chances are slim.

"As I figure it, the Chink, Fong, had some deal on with Searcy. They got into an argument and Fong laid him out. Several things, among them a watch, were in Searcy's pockets that evidently didn't belong to him. Maybe he robbed the Chink.

"Anyway, the Chink about kills Searcy then gets out. In the hall he bumps into this white man. The white man gives the Chink a rap on the head that lays him out; but not before he gets a shot at the white man. The white man also shot, but missed. Anyway, there lay the white man dying, and the Chink near him with the automatic in his hand—the automatic that—"

"Just a minute, Sergeant!" spoke up Carney. "You say that white man had planned to rob the Chink. That's some of Searcy's work. Did you get the white man's name?"

"Yeah. He said it was Gaynor—or something like that. You know him?"

"I thought I did!" muttered Carney grimly. "Any more grief, Sergeant?"

"No; it's all clear enough except for one thing. On Searcy's desk I found a lot of broken porcelain—and this!"

He took something from his pocket. There was an instant of dead silence; then above the Blarney Kid's laugh rose Big Jim's bellow of terror.

In Sergeant Merriman's hand was the head—and the pure white face—of the "*Goddess of Evil Desire.*"

Shanghai Bill

The strange story of a ship and a sheep and of sundry exciting events—by the mariner-author of "Three Mates."

By

CAPTAIN DINGLE



Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

*Whipple tried to pet the ram
—and got butted so hard that
he fell into a pan of hot mash.*

WHEN the misty coastline grew sharp, and the Montevideo pilot-boat danced out to meet the *South-down*, Mr. Noakes, chief officer, sighed gratefully and trotted along the iron deck to the forecandle head to see about getting the anchors ready.

The voyage so far had been torment to him. In the great bustling port, where once he had many friends, he looked forward to a respite at least. He had last visited Montevideo as master of a steamer much finer, and bigger by a thousand tons than the ancient cattle-ship of which he was now mate. But that was quite a few years ago. "Bo's'n, we'll use the starboard anchor," he said briskly. The seamen grinned at the sudden alteration in his manner.

"The old goat! Bet he's got a bit o' hot stuff ashore here," they chuckled.

"Then let's hope she warms him up proper, for he's been frosty enough all the passage out!" one added sulkily. . . .

Mr. Noakes had not seemed frosty without reason. And he had long passed the age when bits of hot stuff had charm for him. But seamen have a way of guessing

at things, particularly things concerning their officers: and something had to account for the mate's grouch and its sudden disappearance. The guess was wrong this time, that was all.

Some of the heaviness came back into his face when, the steamer anchored, Captain Whipple met him at the bridge ladder.

"See if you can get the cargo gear rigged some sort of shipshape, Mr. Noakes. Do a more sailorly job than you did on that boat we lost." The pilot was beside the Captain, and apparently was not enjoying this little mate-baiting as much as Captain Whipple had expected.

"The boat was lost through rotten gear, sir," the mate blurted out desperately. "Some of the cargo gear's none too good, either. And that locker in the steering-engine house still lacks a latch."

"The boat was lost through rotten work lashing it, Mr. Noakes—and the locker aft needs nothing but a bit o' spun-yarn. Get to your duty now, and have done with your back chat. You talk too much, and that's bad for old chief officers these busy days."

Mr. Noakes lost his fleeting briskness.

He was only too well aware of the truth so brutally impressed upon him by the young cock-a-whoop skipper. Times *were* bad for old chief mates; they were none too good for elderly shipmasters since the great war, which left hundreds of keen, highly tested, up-to-date young navigators on the beach seeking employment at sea.

TEN years earlier, Captain Noakes had considered his seagoing career honorably finished, after a lifetime afloat. He had attained to command, and had made a name. Master of one of the biggest live cattle-carrying steamers in the South American trade, he had an excellent record of safe transport of live cattle and sheep.

He had gone into the cattle trade because of his keen interest in animals. Much of his success was due to painstaking contriving, to the end that his living freights might suffer as little as possible on the unavoidably long ocean-passages. He had retired from the sea, and gone into farming and livestock raising, out of his love for things of the soil and the creatures of its cultivation. He had worked, too. It was work alone that enabled him to spread the dwindling of his savings over ten years, before the fate of most voluntarily land-bound sailors overtook him and sent him to sea again.

By this time, conditions had changed.

"I'd be glad to give you a ship, Captain, but I have little opportunity now," his old employer told him. "The big combines have squeezed me dry. If you'd take a mate's berth I might—"

Noakes had taken that. He joined the *Southdown* as chief officer, swallowing the lump in his throat, sure that his experience and quality must in time bring him due reward in command again. But the outward passage quelled his enthusiasm sadly. The skipper was small of soul and mean of spirit. A nephew of the owner, he had contrived to edge himself into a part-ownership of one of the two remaining steamers in the line; he brought along with his captaincy all the petty meanness and money-grubbing bitterness of his kind. He had made a voyage as a very junior officer with Noakes when the latter was master of the crack steamer; and having been a most indifferent junior under a thoroughly competent master, Whipple now licked his thin lips with relish when his old, critical skipper was given to his hands as a subordinate.

Everything that a good chief officer

looked for was lacking in the *Southdown*. Gear was bad and old; deck stores were estimated at the lowest possible level at which it was practicable to keep the ship up to survey; paint and red lead were the most generous items allowed, and they were expected to take the place of metal. Such things as boat-falls, grips, and covers were to be kept serviceable with splices and paint. More than one lifeboat on the *Southdown's* boat-deck had a tender spot in the bottom planking caused by rot set in by leakings through cracked covers. The latch on the locker in the steering-gear house, which Noakes had spoken about to the skipper, was a small matter; but lack of it reflected the general policy of the ship.

WHEN the steamer was hauled in to the wharf to discharge, the mate was ready for the stevedores. Sheer good seamanship enabled him to rig his gear shipshape so far as hazard of accident went; good seamanship made him regard the result with humiliation in the eyes of critical chief officers of better-found ships.

When work stopped for the day, and he had set his watchman for the night, he went about his preparations for shore-going with deliberation. And when he stepped to the gangway at last, he took a last look around the steamer as a good chief mate should before passing to the dock. He walked aft on an impulse, and fastened with spun-yarn the door that lacked a latch. He shook his head as he did that; it was such a paltry thing! He would buy a latch out of his own pocket. . . . But the shops were closed when he reached the city. It was nothing that mattered much anyhow. Nothing was kept in the locker except oilcans and waste used about the machinery of the steering-gear.

There were thousands of sheep awaiting shipment. The *Southdown* discharged her cargo quickly; on the wharf was her homeward load, fresh from the up-country ranges, and bleating, foolishly frantic with the long train journey and the weary trail. A thousand head of horned cattle had to go below decks, after the holds were stowed full of hides for cargo and fodder for cattle-food. The cattle gave little trouble. It was the sheep that made live freighting comical for the spectator and maddening for the sailor. But Mr. Noakes, who with the head cattleman had to get the woolies aboard and see to their safe voyaging and landing, stepped ashore with a

clear eye and a brisk step as if a mob of sheep had no power to aggravate him. The head cattleman and the sheep-tender were new in the trade. They profanely assured the mate that every step they took toward the pens carried them one step nearer to hell on hoofs. They knew, and they were right in a way, that a mob of crazy sheep can be as smothering to a man afoot as a bog of mud up to his middle.

"They'll give no trouble, if—" muttered Mr. Noakes, seeking all along the pens for something which he presently recognized. "There we are, men—I thought we'd find him still on the job! Hello Bill, old boy!"

"Bill? Aint no Bill there!" grumbled the sheepman.

"Nothin' but a rank old ram!" the cattleman growled. Mr. Noakes leaned over a snug, dry pen, occupied solely by a fat, ribald-looking old sheep whose eye was shockingly knowing as he backed away from the mate's questing hand.

"There, Bill! Don't forget me, do you? Think hard, old fellow! How have they been treating you? Damme, but I'm glad to find you still on deck!"

The ram cautiously nuzzled the mate's hand, as if he understood the words uttered by that gentle, friendly voice. While sheepman and cattleman hung over the hurdle in blank wonder, Mr. Noakes chattered on, and soon got his fingers into the ram's heavy neck wool. A greasy collar then appeared, with a brass tag on it, reading:

SHANGHAI BILL

of

MONTEVIDEO

"He's an old shipmate of mine," chuckled the mate. "I taught him his business. Didn't I, Bill?"

The old ram blatted hoarsely, butting the caressing hand with a skull like granite.

"Huh! What business?" grunted the sheepman.

"You'll see!" The mate nodded, and proceeded to get ready for the sheep.

MARCHING two or three thousand sheep across a wharf, up a runway, and along a ship's deck to the pens provided for them may not seem to be a tremendous undertaking. Indeed it would not be worth mentioning—except that sheep are sheep. The men of the *Southdown* were mainly either old hands in the cattle trade of phlegmatic steamer deckhands. They just knew enough to shout or shift a hurdle as ordered.

The gangways were adequate, the sheep-pens properly secured; but Mr. Noakes did not achieve an easy assurance, even with Shanghai Bill in sight, until he saw a wrinkled, shrunk pampas Indian creep out of some cunning cranny and fling open the hurdle of Shanghai Bill's pen.

"Timothy!" the mate yelped, and the little Indian turned swiftly. Mr. Noakes was halfway down the gangway again, running with hand outstretched to greet Timothy, when Captain Whipple appeared at his companionway door, dressed for shore business.

"I'll not tell you again about your slackness, Mr. Noakes," Whipple shouted. "Those sheep should be three-parts in by now!"

"It's Shanghai Bill and Timothy, sir," Noakes explained.

"And who, may I ask, is Shanghai Bill? Or Timothy? Is the ship to be held up—"

"Beg pardon, sir, I thought you knew them. They're—"

"I don't care a whoop who your friends are, Mr. Noakes! If the sheep are not all housed and the vessel ready for sea when I come aboard this evening you can expect to go home out of a job," Whipple retorted sharply.

Mr. Noakes ought to have stepped heavily. But he did not; he saw the skipper drive away in a shiny automobile that matched the dazzle of his clothes, and then briskly placed the men to receive the sheep. He joined Timothy on the wharf, and the sheepman and cattleman ceased trying to drive frantic sheep in a straight line when their ideas all ran in conic sections. A few old hands in the business, who had traded to Montevideo before, gave but fleeting attention to the loading; others, new to the port, gaped in astonishment.

Mr. Noakes went down to pat the old ram on the head and give him a sweet, juicy turnip; then he returned to the steamer and took up a position at the head of one of the sheep gangways. Timothy squealed some queer noises, and his native shepherds opened one of the great pens beside the railroad tracks. Then the withered little man, with Shanghai Bill following at his heels, trotted past the huddling sheep, and then aboard the steamer. Like a living tide the sheep surged after. Leaping over shadows, their woolly backs undulating like a waveless sea, they bleated foolishly and followed that gay deceiver Shanghai Bill up the runway that was to

commit them to restless weeks of fearsome sea travel.

At the runway head, the mate motioned Timothy which pens to fill first, and the flock crowded the narrow alleyways, eager as children at the *Pied Piper's* heels. Then the true genius of Shanghai Bill was seen; it was the cunning that had first given him his name. Once he had the sheep completely under control, the old ram stepped slickly aside through a hurdle held open by Timothy, and the mob of sheep, seeing no gate where the Indian stood, cascaded on to the end of the pens, and a sheepman shut them in. Shanghai Bill and Timothy trotted ashore by another runway, and repeated the process.

MR. NOAKES chuckled like a boy.

After the years, he could still thrill to it. He had taken the ram as a yearling, had carried him as a pet for several voyages, teaching him things which would be risky for some rams to know. But in Shanghai Bill he had an unusual beast. The port authorities, witnessing Bill's first trial as a shanghaier of sheep, offered such a price for him that Mr. Noakes could not well refuse it. He was sure that Bill would have a fine home and a good time. For a few voyages he had been able to watch results for himself, and his old pet was indeed in clover. One of staid Mr. Noakes' rare jests had been the naming of the ram. He had been master of a fine steamer then; his officers laughed at the jest, and some of the laughter was honest. Whipple's one voyage as junior to Captain Noakes was prior to Bill's advent; but no doubt, had Whipple been there when the ram was named, he would have laughed too. Whipple was that sort of officer—he would laugh at any superior's humor.

The sheep flooded the ship. Sheepmen who had only seen steamers loaded in the ordinary way, simply stood pop-eyed in admiration. By noon, the entire after-deck was full of blatting sheep that quickly settled down to placid munching of food pitched in to them by speechless tenders. Mr. Noakes ate his own dinner in ten minutes, and spent the rest of the noon hour inspecting the after-deck pens—seeing to it that the fastenings were sea-fast, and that the alleyways were clear to the stern, so that men might get aft to read the log, and to keep the steering-engine oiled. Some modern steamers had logs which registered on the bridge, but not the *Southdown*: she

still wiggled the old taffrail log, almost as out of date for steamers as the ancient log-chip and line of early windjammers. Sheepmen had a habit, if not watched, of hauling on deck fodder enough to last several days, just to save themselves a bit of daily tackle drill. Mr. Noakes knew that trick. He was on the lookout for it.

IN late afternoon, when the fore-deck pens were half full, Captain Whipple appeared, accompanied by two elderly gentlemen. They were in time to see the last mob of sheep go aboard from the railway pens. The steamer would have to wait for another train to complete her lading. The mate, all unconscious of his audience, was taking Timothy's place for this batch, and marched aboard with old Shanghai Bill at his heels like a regimental drum-major with a regimental mascot.

Captain Whipple gazed fiercely, his mouth open to rake Noakes fore and aft. One of the elderly gentlemen chuckled, and the other uttered an exclamation of keen admiration. Whipple held his tongue, while all watched the play. First was Mr. Noakes, red of face and bright of eye; then ribald old Shanghai Bill, uttering raucous, masterful blats and stepping like a colt; then a crowding, bleating, silly-faced swarm of sheep filling the runway with a smell of warm grease, all so anxious to keep within scent of Bill that the ship might have been a slaughter-pen for all they cared.

"Splendid, Mr. Noakes! You still have the cunning," cried one of the elderly gentlemen. Mr. Noakes turned in gratified surprise at meeting the *Southdown's* owner.

"I was glad to renew acquaintance with old Bill, Mr. Fernie," he laughed, feeling the grip of a friendly hand. Then, while Whipple scarcely concealed his impatience, Noakes was presented to the other gentleman.

"We're going home with you," said Mr. Fernie, half-turning as Whipple dragged him away. Noakes went about his work, knowing that later he would hear more.

The train with the rest of the sheep was coming into the siding; there would be nothing to prevent the steamer going to sea that evening, unless—well, unless something happened, which did happen. Some sheep were found unfit for shipment. The mate and Shanghai Bill marched on board those that were passed, while Whipple pressed his face to the porthole of his stateroom under the bridge and stared curiously at the proceed-



"There, Bill! Don't forget me, do you? Think hard, old fellow! How have they been treating you?"

ings. His guests drove off to town when they heard of the delay, and he had little to do but fume and fret until the remainder of his livestock was passed as fit.

"That's a clever animal, Noakes," he remarked, when Timothy took old Bill ashore to his pen.

"He's more than clever, sir," replied Noakes eagerly. "I've known him since he was a lambkin. He can almost talk, Bill can."

"He'd be worth a pot of money at home," muttered Whipple, turning away from the mate as if ashamed of even a momentary unbending, and following Timothy ashore. Noakes set his watchmen at the runways, but his work did not prevent him seeing Whipple when he tried to pet the old ram and got butted so hard in the stomach that he fell backward into a pan of hot mash. Mr. Noakes was very busy indeed when Whipple came on board cursing savagely.

AT midnight the last of the sheep were ready, and the mate went to find Timothy. But the Indian was nowhere to be found. This might have been annoying with more sheep to get aboard; but Noakes made no fuss over the few. He led Shanghai Bill himself, and the last pen was filled without trouble. Whipple was pacing up

and down on the wharf when the mate took Bill back to his pen. A seaman had been sent to tell the two passengers all was ready for leaving; presently they arrived, and the mate had to see to hoisting in their baggage. Then he had to take up his station for working the steamer out, and in the business of getting in the forward wires, and heaving in the offshore anchor, he had little time for matters outside the ship. But just before the lighted wharf began to blur with distance, he saw a small, dancing figure flinging arms and legs all ways beneath the arc-light at the very tip of the pier.

"Good old Timothy!" Noakes chuckled, and waved an arm in farewell, though he knew it could not be seen from the shore. It made him feel warm and cheerful to know that even an old Indian remembered him kindly enough to want to wave him a good-by, though it was midnight.

As he came on deck in the morning watch, and waited for the bo's'n and cattleman to go with him on the rounds of the stock pens, Mr. Fernie stepped out, wrapped in a dressing-gown, sniffing the keen air with relish.

"I'm glad to see you so comfortable, Mr. Noakes." The old fellow smiled a bit wistfully. "I was afraid when you took this berth there was very little ahead for you. But I think there'll be a change for the better after all. I stood out for a long time against the big combines, and you saw how I nearly sunk. Now I've joined up with 'em. I've only two steamers left, but Mr. Dorgan, who's aboard with me, is a fine

man, and a fair one. He values merit rather than mere bulk. You'll see the day when you command a steamer again, Noakes."

"I hope so, sir," said Noakes, soberly. "I'm thankful for your interest, anyhow. The big combines scarcely encourage age, though."

"They don't, that's true," Mr. Fernie agreed. "But I've spoken to Mr. Dorgan about you particularly, Noakes, and I think he'll make an exception. I insisted on having a word to say regarding my old employees, at least."

THE mate might have watched interestingly for Mr. Dorgan's appearance on deck, but other matters intervened. As he reached the farthest forward corner of the lower cattle-deck, a hoarse, familiar blat made the acrid air reverberate. A thousand uneasy cattle lowed and bellowed and stamped. The hoarse blat rose above all other sounds. The bo's'n and cattleman grinned, looking appraisingly at the mate, wondering what he would do. Mr. Noakes plunged into the dark pen improvised from hurdles filched from the upperdeck pens, and sunk his hands into the hot wool of Shanghai Bill.

"Who's responsible for this?" the mate snapped, turning upon the two men with him. "Somebody's going to smell hell for this! Who stole this ram?"

Neither the bo's'n or the cattleman had expected to see the mate get so furious. They grinned and winked at each other.

"I'm going to fetch the Captain!" stated Mr. Noakes, and stalked along the steamy 'tween-decks to the ladder. And Shanghai Bill, with one challenging blat, leaped his pen and followed his friend. He plunged between the bo's'n and the cattleman, upsetting them under the hoofs of two frenzied steers, and when the mate was midway up the ladder Bill was at his heels, climbing like a fireman. At the head of the ladder both met the skipper.

"Where are you taking him?" he demanded. "Here, Bill! Here, boy!"

Bill ignored him, huddling close to the mate. Mr. Noakes met Whipple's eye and took no pains to hide his feelings.

"If you are responsible for stealing this sheep, sir, you'll regret it. I advise you to take him back, even at the cost of a day's steaming," he said grimly.

"You do, eh?" sneered Whipple. Then he turned red in the face, and grabbed for Bill's wool. "You mind your own business,

Noakes! And don't go accusing me of stealing, or you'll regret that, I warn you! The sheep hid himself among the others. Can't blame an old ram for that. Who let him out, though? Where's— Oh, there you are, bo's'n! Take Bill back to his pen and make him fast more securely."

Shanghai Bill had been long ashore. He had lost his sea-legs. Before he could help himself Whipple and the two men in his interest had hauled Bill down the ladder again and bundled him into his stifling pen, fiercely blating in protest. The mate followed.

"I'll speak to Mr. Fernie about this," he promised. "If the ram was aboard legitimately it would be an outrage to shut him up in this hovel! Never mind, Bill, old fellow; I'll have you out of it soon."

He turned and hurried on deck, full of his grievance. Whipple shouted for him to return, but he paid no attention; and other shouts joined Whipple's as he emerged on deck. Then Bill clattered up the ladder again, charging along the cattle-deck like a woolly tornado, and let nothing hinder him until he was at the heels of his old master.

NOAKES told Mr. Fernie about Bill.

Mr. Fernie shared his opinion. He gave Whipple to understand that he did not appreciate the stealing of Bill, even in just as it was claimed to be. Whipple was defiant; Mr. Dorgan was inclined to agree with Whipple that a sheep more or less was nothing to disrupt a ship's business over.

Shanghai Bill was dragged below again, but he refused to stay. Sea-legs or none, he contrived to leap or clamber out of every prison they put him into, at sound of the mate's voice. So Mr. Noakes gained a point, and was ordered to make a pen for Bill on the after-deck, and to look after him personally. For a day or two Bill made trouble, because he refused to remain out of sight of Mr. Noakes. The big ram would leap on to hurdle-tops and using them as stepping-stones would suddenly appear at the mate's side, climbing the almost perpendicular iron ladders from the well-deck to the bridge-deck like a chamois. Mr. Fernie saw humor in it. Mr. Dorgan frowned for a day or two, then tersely told the mate that he expected a chief officer of one of his company's steamers to have interests a bit above the antics of sheep. That pleased Whipple, who heard it. Mr. Fernie and Mr. Noakes caught in each other's faces the look which said plainly that elderly chief officers had better watch their step.

Whipple was busy with Mr. Dorgan. The weather was fine, and the darker side of livestock freighting did not appear. No dead beasts were thrown into the sea. The deckhands were able to chip and paint. The steamer was kept clean and tidy. The mate should have received the credit for that but it was Whipple, the assiduous ship-master, who kept at the side of the great man every waking hour and planted the seed of glorification of himself.

"Your steamer is a credit to you, Captain Whipple," Mr. Dorgan admitted. They were aft. The steering-engine had just been oiled and polished. As they stood in the doorway, the locker which lacked a latch swung to the easy swell and opened. A wad of greasy waste fell out into the oil-pan around the engine. A bit of spun-yarn hung loose on the door.

"Tell the mate I want him," Whipple told a seaman painting the engine-house.

"That's a needless piece of slovenliness," Mr. Dorgan snapped. As he glared at the open locker, two bits of waste and a can of oil teetered on the brink of falling. Whipple was stowing the things when Mr. Noakes stepped in through the door.

"Why have you not repaired this locker, Mr. Noakes?" Whipple asked frigidly.

"I repaired it according to your orders, sir, with spun-yarn," retorted the mate angrily. He had seen the displeasure in Mr. Dorgan's face.

"Spun-yarn? I ordered you to tie it with spun-yarn?" Whipple snapped, in a tone which was in itself a denial. He turned to Dorgan, shrugging his shoulders, as much as to say: "What can you expect of an old fool like this?"

"I suggest the ship's business will be better carried on, and the company's interests better served, by wasting no man's time about such things," Dorgan put in sharply. "Whoever's at fault, it's a piece of sheer trifling. Have it put right."

Even Whipple was not sure that he had scored in that skirmish. Mr. Noakes fastened the spun-yarn latch himself, and went forward to tell the chief engineer to make a fastening for the door and charge it to the deck department. He knew that would chafe Whipple, already at loggerheads with his engineer over fuel and lubricant costs.

AS the *Southdown* stretched her track across the Trades, the seas took her by the flanks and rolled her heavily. Sprays flew, and now and then a crest lifted and

hurled itself among the frightened sheep. The lower decks rumbled with the thunder of distressed bellowings, but the livestock persisted in health; there had been no fatalities. Even when a stiff gale arose and throttled the steamer there were no deaths, no broken limbs. Whipple took on a smug air of pride. The two elderly passengers wore the smiles of ship-owners watching their property earn dividends with no harassing forfeits. Mr. Noakes pursued the tenor of his daily duties without display, attending to everything in a matter-of-fact way as if it were simply what he was expected to do—which it was.

One late afternoon, after a full watch of hard labor with the crew, on the spare coal in the after-hold, the mate climbed wearily from the hold and went to his room to wash and dress for supper. He was covered with coal-dust, hot, and choking. All that had been done was but preparation; tomorrow there would be the actual shoveling and carrying of the coal. It was all part of the business, but none the less hard. As he passed the chart-room door, he heard voices. Whipple was on the bridge above. The two elderly passengers were chatting; and Mr. Noakes hurried past, not wishing to eavesdrop. But he could not help hearing his name, and his step halted involuntarily.

"Oh, Mr. Noakes is capable enough," Mr. Dorgan was saying. The mate warmed to the words. Then: "But he's really nothing but an old farmer, Fernie. Captain Whipple thinks very little of him. Young blood—"

That was all that Noakes heard. He passed beyond earshot. When he reached his berth he sat heavily on the settee, coal-dust and all, and his face grew haggard and worn. He had heard his sentence. It might as well have been his death-warrant. He ate his supper in stony silence, giving Whipple another peg on which to hang a charge of surliness for Mr. Dorgan's benefit.

A heavy sea was making up. At midnight the mate had the open hatch refastened. Some of the canvas along the after-rails blew down, and before it could be made good the shivering sheep were drenched and frantic. Some cattle were thrown down; a bar was broken and a score of heavy brutes got loose in the dim 'tween-decks and dashed wildly from side to side as the steamer lurched.

In a watery, gray dawn, the second mate reported half a dozen steers so inextricably tangled that they could scarcely be freed

without breaking some limbs. That meant killing them, and heaving them overboard. Whipple was nervous. His employers heard the report. They heard him tell Mr. Noakes to go down and clear the mess.

"And when you're rigging the gear to dump the dead ones, see you don't get over-eager and dump more than you have to!" Whipple added acidly. "It's a wonder we can't make one voyage without loss. If the cattle had been properly—"

The mate turned his back on the rest. Two seamen, with the fourth mate, rigged a tackle from the foremast, with rope slings. The mate, with the bo's'n and all the cattle-hands, groped among the kicking terror below. After half an hour of waiting, Captain Whipple leaned over the bridge rail and bawled down the open hatch to know what was the delay. He got no answer. Ten minutes later he bawled again. Then the mate came up, followed by the bo's'n and the cattlemen; all, except the mate, looking perky and satisfied.

"Well? How many must I lose, Mr. Noakes?" yelled Whipple. "Dammit, what's so funny—you men?"

Mr. Dorgan looked dyspeptic, sour.

"The cattle are all secure, sir," the mate said shortly, and went about the business of the day. Mr. Fernie chuckled, digging a finger at Mr. Dorgan's well-covered ribs.

WHIPPLE took the credit to himself.

He bragged that he had never lost a beast except through the idiocy of subordinates; he was so full of himself that when the chief engineer asked him to verify the mate's request for a brass fitting for the steering-room locker, and to initial the charge against the deck department, he abused the dour mechanic so thoroughly that he was flatly told he might whistle for his latch until he got home.

But the mate was in better odor with the engine-room force. The second engineer brought the latch to his room, and they shared a wee snort of good whisky in payment. That fitting would never be charged against anybody. And in the evening, when the sheepmen hoisted up the feed for the sheep, Mr. Noakes started aft to put the latch on the locker.

Before he reached the after-deck ladder he smelled mischief. His nose picked out unerringly the powerful smells of cattle and sheep. There was more than mere animal smell—there was smoke! And the uneasy beasts made known their terror while the

big seas gripped the steamer and rolled her dizzily.

"It's the coal in the after-hold, sir!" the third mate reported.

"Tell the Captain," said Mr. Noakes curtly, and ran to the break of the bridge-deck beyond which the smoke thickened with ghastly rapidity. There was a plank partition here, as at the fore hatch. It was at the planks the smoke swirled madly.

Already the densely packed sheep pens stretching clear aft vibrated with the frenzy of fire-shy brutes. Red flame licked the partition. When Captain Whipple arrived, pale with fear, Mr. Fernie and Dorgan were at his heels, wide-eyed.

"Start the hoses! Get after it before it takes hold!" yelled Whipple. The hoses were being rolled along before he arrived; but Whipple had to make a noise in order to impress those two wide-eyed gentlemen.

The sheep began to crowd each other in the narrow pens. All animals fear fire, and most of all when helplessly prisoned.

The steamer rolled viciously.

"Pass the word to head her up to the sea," ordered Whipple.

"It'll help the fire, sir," said the mate.

"It'll ease the ship! It's your job to fight the fire," was Whipple's retort, again in a blustering voice. But now the wide-eyed gentlemen were not so easily impressed. The steamer swung around into the wind and sea, and the smoke rolled aft. But something was not right. The steamer continued swinging, kept right on around the circle, and as she came broadside to the sea she shipped a terrific mountain of water amidships, high over the bridge-deck, a torrent pouring down the engine-room skylight.

"Steering-gear's jammed!" came the shout from the bridge.

Whipple ran to the bridge. Darkness was coming on. There was a red glare in the thickening smoke. And the steamer lay down on her side, the seas breaching over her.

THE mate called men to follow, and plunged down among the packed sheep pens. On the bridge the skipper rang the engines to a stop. It was hazardous to run her while not under steerage. Fernie and Dorgan clung to the after bridge-deck rail nervously, awed at the abrupt change from security to peril. They might well be awed! The sheep, flung from their feet when the steamer lurched, scrambled mad-

ly. Some pens were thrown down. The sheep, terrified already by the fire, took panic and massed like a torrent of clinging wool as far from the smoke as possible. It was into the midst of that maniac mass the mate led his men. And they went out of sight like stones in quicksand.

followed; three others dared not. They were scarcely to be blamed. But the ship was in an evil situation. Whipple clung to the bridge rail and shrieked futile orders. Engineers clambered up, trying to close their skylight against the seas. Swift darkness fell, shot with flames now hissing devilishly. The bo's'n and his men poured streams of water on the fire; the second and fourth mates hacked at the board bulkhead with axes. Then a sea roared along one side, snatched loose half a dozen lifebuoys and ignited their water-lights. Half a dozen dancing will-o'-the-wisps of chemical fire leaped along the flooded decks to add to the terror.



Seamen, bleeding and whipped, crawled back from the massed sheep. "Where is the mate?" cried Mr. Fernie. "Did you leave him down there?"

Mr. Noakes knew he must reach the steering-engine. All the connecting-rods between bridge and engine-house were in sight. They were not broken or jammed. The trouble must be aft. And that first plunge into the packed sheep showed him how real the peril was. After what seemed to Fernie and Dorgan to be an hour, but which was five minutes, Noakes and his men crawled back to the ladders—gasping for breath, beaten and cut by frenzied hoofs, smothered by the moist, hot wool.

"Try again, lads! Don't let a few sheep lick you!" gasped the mate. He was into the mess again in a moment. Three men

"My God! What can be done?" groaned Mr. Dorgan. He was seeing sea-life in the raw. Two seamen, bleeding and whipped, crawled back from the massed sheep. The living wave upheaved and spewed forth a third, unable to reach the ladder. His mates dragged him clear.

"Where is the mate?" cried Mr. Fernie. "Did you men leave him down there?"

The men mumbled. They were as stout as men could be, but the thing was too big for them. Whipple ran down from the bridge, chalk-white and shaking. The steamer was taking on a deadly roll. From the cattle-decks came the roar of tortured

brutes hurled in heaps against the steel sides of the hull. The smoke from the burning coal grew blacker. It was laden with murderous fumes.

"You'd better put on life-belts, gentlemen! We'll have to take to the boats!" yelled Whipple. "Where's that mate of mine? What is he good for? Somebody swing out the boats! My God!"

NOBODY heeded him. Every man clung to the rails with deathly grip, staring aft across the billowing smoke and writhing sheep. Something was coming forward. It was a man—Mr. Noakes, fearfully bruised and almost blinded—unrecognizable except that at his heels butted and charged old Shanghai Bill, blatting rustily. From the middle of the huddle they appeared; together they forced a passage through sheep that fought to fall in behind them and follow. They went through the smoke like a breeze.

They won to the ladder. Noakes clattered up; Shanghai Bill took the ladder like a goat. And a living tide of sheep filled the ladder to choking. But the stream was started. At the bridge-deck, reeking with singed wool and clothing, Noakes and and Shanghai Bill dodged aside and let the sheep pour forward.

"Drive 'em along!" panted Noakes, and ran down the other ladder with the old ram at his heels. Driving through the smoke again, the pair started a second flood of sheep up the other ladder. Then it was but a matter of time before the sheep poured up from the after-deck and left it clear. The fire was conquered while sheep still jumped the smoke.

"That's a miracle!" stammered Mr. Dorgan, crushed against the saloon companionway by the frenzied sheep. But Mr. Fernie and the crew were already running aft to help with the jammed steering-gear.

Dorgan ran after them—the skipper too, making a great show of taking charge. They reached the engine-house just in time to see the mate reach in among the gears and drag out a wad of greasy waste. That was all that had jammed the steering-gear. And Mr. Dorgan's eye flew at once to the locker door, swinging open—a bit of spun-yarn dangling where the latch should be.

"Pass the word to the bridge to go ahead! The steering-gear's clear!" shouted Whipple, and started to tell Mr. Dorgan how he had been saved from grievous peril. Dorgan stopped him, watching the mate.

Mr. Noakes was singed of all eyebrows, his coat was ripped to smoldering rags, his face and hands were little more than hoof-beaten pulp; but with the steering-gear free again, he bade his men repair the sheep pens, and took Shanghai Bill forward to lead back the sheep. The steamer was again on an even keel, steaming ahead, quartering the seas and no more than uncomfortable. Safe!

"The cattle are knocked about a bit, sir—but no great damage," the cattelman reported.

"We came out of that pretty well, sir," Whipple suggested to Mr. Dorgan.

"H'm!" returned Dorgan cryptically. "Come along, Mr. Fernie. I want to see Noakes, and you'll want to be present."

Whipple stepped beside them. His fear gone, he was full of importance again.

"Great stunt of that ram, sir. I'd be happy to make you a present of him—" he began. Mr. Dorgan held up a hand.

"You'd better get back to the bridge, Captain. As for Shanghai Bill, I'd be proud to have him—but I'll see his owner about that! Come along, Fernie."

AGAIN Mr. Noakes passed the chart-room on his way to his berth. He was scorched and bruised, his lungs were smoked and raw. He heard voices as he passed; again his name was mentioned.

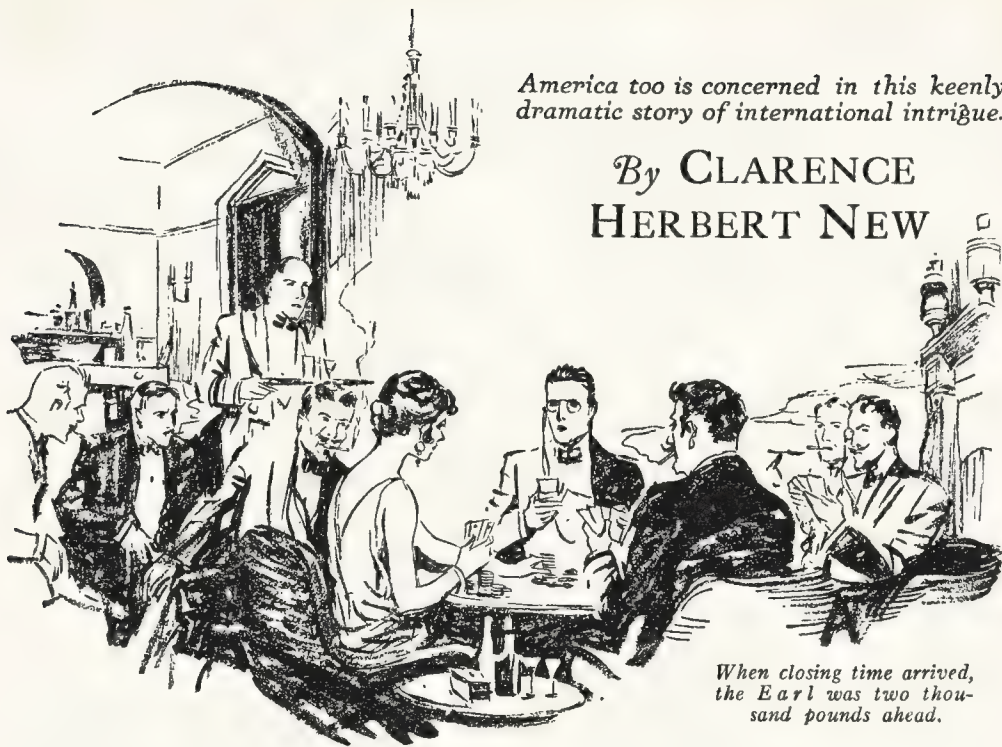
"I agree with you that Noakes is a splendid fellow, Fernie—"

Noakes had heard as good as that before. He hurried on, but still the rest reached his ears.

"But this is a business for young—"

Mr. Noakes ran the rest of the way to his room. He wanted to hear no more. He suddenly felt his age, and all his hurts. He was sagged down on his berth, dabbing arnica on his bruises and iodine on his cuts, when Fernie and Dorgan passed his hooked door.

"That's settled, then," Dorgan said emphatically. "You tell him, and if it suits him, as you insist it will, ask him to step along here when he's rested. I've always wanted a man like him at the head of our passenger-liner service. We'll give him command"—they stopped at Mr. Dorgan's door; Dorgan's voice filled the saloon—"of the new liner. In another year there'll be no live freighting. All chilled carcasses for our ships! Even a Whipple can't lose sheep if they're frozen—unless he loses the ship; and he partly owns that!"



America too is concerned in this keenly dramatic story of international intrigue.

By CLARENCE
HERBERT NEW

*When closing time arrived,
the Earl was two thousand pounds ahead.*

Free Lances in Diplomacy

Illustrated by William Molt

LEAVING the other Ministers still deadlocked on the question of the peace note, in the Cabinet Room at Number Ten Downing Street, Earl Lammerford came out of the house about ten in the evening and beckoned to his chauffeur, who had parked his car down-street a short distance. As he stood there, waiting, Captain John Enderbury came out of the Foreign Office and crossed the street to chat for a moment.

"Get into the car and drive along with me, Enderbury," requested Lammerford. "There are one or two points I'd like to thresh out with you. —Er—Martison!" —to the chauffeur. "Drive up around Shaftesbury Avenue—cut through some of the smaller streets where it's quiet—and then back to St. James' Club. . . . Now, first—how often are you seen going into the F. O., John?"

"As a rule, only when I go there direct from the War Office in uniform. There's always a deal of communication between 'em, you know."

"How many people do you suppose know of your connection with the F. O.?"

"Sir Austen, three of his under-secretaries, and my former Chief, the Secretary of State for War. Outside of them, I doubt if anybody knows of the connection, because I'm supposed to have a Staff appointment in the Inspector General's Department. It was at Earl Trevor's suggestion that I was shifted over to the F. O."

"Aye—he's keen for a chap who has done unusual things on the quiet, as you did in the Army Intelligence. Now take this matter of the American peace note, supposed to be sponsored by their Secretary of State. Somehow he didn't give us the impression of thinking in any such large way as this, when he was over here at St. James'. Possibly—after Briand's suggestion—it may have worked out from a discussion between the President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Commerce. Giving the credit to their State Department, for the sake of argument, the proposition is a big one. It won't stop war—nothing will, in the

present over-populated condition of every country on the globe—but it will put the responsibility squarely up to the first World State that wantonly starts a war of aggression. The basic idea is that any signatory Power agrees that it will not declare war against another Power until every other means of settling the controversy has been tried, unsuccessfully—and that the State which does so declare war must bear the full burden of blame. No way of sneaking out of it by making this or that claim of being forced into an impossible position. The cards will be on the table—the rest of the world will know all the circumstances. In the Cabinet, just now, there is objection that the Locarno Pact will prevent us from signing—but that's ridiculous! Sir Austen obtained the agreement, there, that if Germany declares an aggressive war against France, we side with France; if France is the aggressor, we side with Germany. Nothing in that pact is inimical to the peace note. Nor is there in France's agreements with Czechoslovakia and Poland—or Italy's, with Roumania and Albania. But the Cabinet appears to be deadlocked over the question of our signing—and I can't for the life of me see why! From my experience of the last twenty years—some of them in the F. O.—I'd say there is a strong undercurrent of mysterious influence against the peace note in Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Have you turned up anything in your investigations which would seem to bear upon this?"

"Not directly. And yet— There are two women in London society who are seen dining occasionally with three or four of the Cabinet men—sometimes with their wives—sometimes with a party of half a dozen—sometimes alone. They're handsome, brilliant, and know a lot about political affairs, rather on the Liberal side. Both of them are as much at home in Paris as they are here—they have a wide circle of acquaintances—some mixture of Continental blood on the distaff side—"

"Are any of their acquaintances men who might be 'underground political's'?"

"I've seen no evidence in that direction. They know foreigners in London and Paris, of course; who doesn't? But none who are under suspicion as possible secret agents."

AFTER driving along Shaftesbury Avenue for a block or so, the chauffeur had swung north through the narrower Great Windmill Street, and Lexington Street,

which is a continuation as far as Broad Street. As they were running slowly through Lexington Street, which had but three electricians on the long block, Captain Enderbury noticed a group of four persons standing in front of a house about halfway down, at a point where the little street was fairly dark.

When the car passed the group, the Captain suddenly grasped the speaking-tube.

"Martison! Swing in to the curb—quickly—and park there a few moments!"

Enderbury got out leisurely and then leaned into the car as if for another word or two with the Earl. "Those two women across the street are the ones I just mentioned," he said quietly. "One of the men is a Berlin banker at the head of their London Branch—the other was originally from Moscow, but is now managing a large exporting-house in Queen Victoria Street. Lift the little back curtain half an inch and look at 'em! I'm curious to see what they are doing in this street, which isn't the irreproachable neighborhood it once was."

A moment later, the group of four sauntered slowly up to the door of the house, rang a bell, spoke to a butler who opened the door, and then went in. Excepting on the second floor, where two of the windows were lighted, the house showed no sign of life—and the adjoining one had a light only in the basement windows, over which dark shades were drawn—only a streak of light showing at the sides of the curtains.

Entering the car again, Enderbury told the chauffeur to turn left at the next corner, and through Beak Street to Regent.

"There's a little broken section in that iron railing which I'll recognize when I come back here—so I'll not miss the house. I'm fairly certain it'll be a place I've heard of before—one of the 'night-clubs' where one can get liquor or wine until two in the morning—good dancing-floor and small orchestra, sound-proofed walls—a private dining-room, if one wishes. Not necessarily disreputable at all—it's quite the thing to dance and dine in such places half the night—but all the conveniences for a very large evening if one is quiet and orderly. Nothing against those two women, or the men they're with, to be seen in such places; in fact, they're likely to rub shoulders, there, with personages against whom nothing possibly can be said—always provided, that the place is no more than what it appears on the surface! There are some of those places where it's said that half a mil-

lion pounds has changed hands at high play in a single night, but even Scotland Yard has its work cut out to spot them and get proof enough to warrant a raid. This particular place is known as the Sevillana Club. The doors of the adjoining house have been bricked up, and communicating doors cut through from this house."

"Sounds rather intriguing. In spite of your lack of evidence, I infer that you do fancy those two women may be up to something, under the surface. How does one secure admittance to a place of that sort in these days? Just ring the bell—an' look respectable?"

"Rather not! That would be too easy! And they'd be overrun with more guests than they could handle. No—you've to be recommended by members who know you pretty well and can assure the management that you're not connected with the police or have any object in going there other than enjoying yourself."

"Do you know, John, I've a 'hunch,' as the Yankees say, that if we keep those two women pretty closely under observation, we may turn up something which His Majesty's Govern'm't should know. The Empire, as a whole, should sign that peace note—France, Italy an' Japan, as well! It is contemplated that if fifteen signatories are obtained, it will represent a force of public opinion which it will be very difficult for a predatory State to go against. But some of the Cabinet men are taking a stand which it's not easy to comprehend—and yet, they're honest enough about it! They admit the value of the idea—but don't see how we can sign, with our various treaty-obligations what they are. We answered every one of their objections, but we couldn't budge 'em. There's some underlying reason for it! I say! Do you know any members in that Sevillana Club?"

"Aye—two of 'em. Jefferson Waite, an American who's over here to look after his London Branch, and Lord Meltonhaugh, who's just come into the title. Young chap—going the pace—popular with women."

"Invite them both to lunch with us at the Cecil, tomorrow. We'll ask 'em what the club is like—whether one is permitted to take women guests, or dances with those who are members. They'll very likely know something of me as a Cabinet man."

DURING luncheon next day, Lammerford said that he had heard about the Sevillana Club as an entirely respectable

place of its sort which a member of the Government would run no risk in attending—and asked if the club were really interesting enough to make it worth while.

Young Lord Meltonhaugh laughed.

"Depends somewhat upon the sort of place Your Lordship would consider int'resting. You'll get any sort of wine you care to order, considerably later than they sell it here at the Cecil. One takes no ladies or friends unless they also are members, but there are a number of charming women who are members—perfect dancers, good bridge-players, good talkers—always some mutual acquaintance to introduce one. Twice a week they put on a fancy-dress ball or a *bal masque*; these always are quite entertainin'. Neither Waite nor I ever have seen anything about the place which might be called questionable or compromisin'. Why not let us propose you an' Enderbury as members, an' put in a few evenin's with our lot? —There are two of the ladies lunchin' at the third table, by the window. They'll give you some idea of what our women members are like."

Lammerford took a casual glance, when the pair weren't looking that way.

"Rather toppin' sort, if you ask me!" he remarked. "Faces a bit familiar, too. Fancy one may possibly have been introduced, somewhere."

"Faith—it would be odd if Your Lordship has *not* met 'em—they go everywhere. The brunette is Lady May Garston, and the one with lighter colorin', the Honorable Annabel Darblay. Well—er—shall we put Your Lordship an' the Captain up? The management will advise us in twenty-four hours—they're a bit particular about lookin' up proposed members, y'know."

"Why—er—jolly decent of you an' Waite, Meltonhaugh! I fancy we'd enjoy an occasional evenin' with you very much."

After finishing their luncheon, the guests took their entertainers over to the other table and introduced them to the ladies. Then Enderbury said he must get back to the War Office, and took the Earl off with him. Pulling up a couple of chairs, Lord Meltonhaugh and the American sat down to chat with the women a few moments—mentioning their hosts' interest in the club and saying that they were proposing them.

Lady May glanced up questioningly—when nobody appeared to be within hearing—and asked in guarded tones:

"Do you fancy Natovitch may have some objections in Earl Lammerford's case?"

"Why should he? Two of the other Cabinet men are members!"

"True—but they're of much smaller caliber. Quite large enough to give the club an appearance of ultra-respectability, yet not of sufficient importance or power to make trouble in case they got the impression that Natovitch might be a bit outside the 'Pub.' law. They'd be too much afraid of news-sheet publicity to say a word. But Lammerford wouldn't."

"But—upon my soul, Lady May! I've never seen anything at the club to which a man of that sort could take exception!"

"Which is Natovitch's intention, naturally. But—*attendez!* Our good friend Jeff, here, has more than once expressed his disgust at there being so few places where a man with money to spend can get a little action at cards or any other sort of game. Suppose, now, that Natovitch might be inclined to humor him some evening—provide a quiet room where he and a few friends might play for a blue-sky limit if they felt that way—and that just by some fool chance one always risks in anything of the sort, Earl Lammerford should discover it. Eh? You see?"

Meltonhaugh grinned at Jeff Waite.

"Evidently, Lady May, you've not happened to hear that Lammerford and his closest friend, the Earl of Dyvnaint, have each broken the bank down there in Monaco, upon occasion. What I fancy much more likely is that you'll find the Earl playin' against Jeff Waite—if it can be managed—with the rest of us lookin' on!"

"H-m-m—he's really as much of a sport as that, is he? No—I'd not heard of that—but I'll wager anything you like that it didn't happen after he went into the Cabinet! Still, that bit of information might interest Natovitch—possibly incline him to consider Jeff's desire for a little skirmish with the lid off. But how about Captain Enderbury? He certainly isn't looking for high play—I've not heard that he has much of a bank-account."

"He inherited fifteen thousand a year, at all events, but I fancy his interest would be more in the line of dancing with you—or opening champagne."

"Hmph! A man with such an income shouldn't have much difficulty with us—if that will satisfy him," the Honorable Annabel commented. "By the way—he's in the War Office—what does he do there?"

"Staff appointm'nt with the Inspector General—possibly actin' as one of the

executive officers. Seems to me I heard of his bein' detailed to the Royal Flyin' Corps—but I'm not sure."

WHEN they left the hotel, the Honorable Annabel took a taxi for a bit of shopping she had in mind, and Lady May drove westward in her own car to her town-house in Bayswater. While the car was temporarily halted in a traffic-jam near the Park, a small packet came through the open window and dropped into her lap. She casually tossed the edge of her wrap over the packet as it landed, then, under cover of the wrap, slipped it into a concealed pocket. As other cars had been touching hubs with them on either side, in the traffic-jam, that packet could have come from the window of another car without any of the chauffeurs seeing it. After reaching home, she opened the packet, carefully studied the sheets of typed memoranda it contained, and the notes in the handwriting of several different men. Wrapping these up again, she concealed them on her person in a chamois-skin pocket which she had made for such a purpose—then rang for her maid and changed into a dinner-costume. After dining at a famous house near Hyde Park, she and Lord Ernest Meltonhaugh left the house together in His Lordship's car and were driven to the Sevillana Club in Lexington Street. Here, while he was dancing with another partner, she quietly slipped down to the floor below (corresponding to the parlor-floor of the neighboring houses) and back to a large room in a rear extension used as the office of the "management," which to those a little more on the inside, was supposed to consist of Serge Natovitch—at other times manager of a large exporting house in Queen Victoria Street—and the banker Julius Sandelmann. Who else might be financially interested in the club was anybody's guess—but it was Natovitch who passed upon the eligibility of prospective members, and Sandelmann who did the banking.

The door of this office had a large spring-lock with a steel latch that went a full inch into the casing-slot. It could be opened by turning the knob only when one had also pressed one's heel heavily upon a certain figure in the carpet-border outside. But once the electric connection was made, the door swung open noiselessly upon well-oiled, massive hinges, the door itself being of steel covered with carved teak-wood,



"You and Stefanov are doing valuable work, Lady May!" said Natovitch. "I'll hand you five thousand dollars now, and the balance later."

which was the only trim used in the entire building.

After the door had closed behind her, Lady May stepped over to the right as far as the door of a deep closet where a number of raincoats and other articles were hanging. Along the left side were also an empty trunk and three portmanteaus. Resting her weight upon one end of the threshold-strip, the entire floor slid noiselessly to the right upon ball-bearings until the trunk touched the right-hand wall—revealing one-half of a circular iron stair, down which she went until her head was below the floor-level of the closet. Another electric switch caused the floor to roll back into its original position.

At the foot of the stair, which was much deeper than one would have expected, Lady May found herself in a small room with a steel door in one of its walls. Opening this with a small key, after making a certain electric connection, she stepped into a concrete passage coated with white-enamel paint—evidently underground, and waterproofed, as there was no indication of moisture seeping through. Fifty feet beyond the door, it turned at right angles, then back again toward the house, then left, and left again. One would have had to have a strong sense of polarity to be certain of the direction it took. At the farther end, the passage led through another steel

door into a small chamber from which a circular iron stair went upward to a closet like the first one, but apparently having no opening. For those who knew where to depress another electric connection, however, a section of the oak wainscoting swung around on cantilevers, a similar section on the other side of the wall swung outward, and the visitor was in a library with book-shelving to within four feet of the ceiling.

IN this library, Natovitch sat behind a large table-desk in one corner—between a big open fireplace on one side and a window of leaded glass on the other, with a beautifully wrought steel grille inside of the sash. A burglar would have needed an acetylene torch to cut through it. There was, of course, a door communicating with the rest of the house, but it had its own peculiarities—not the sort of door that one opens hastily, at inopportune moments.

Sandelmann the banker was comfortably smoking a choice cigar in a chair at one end of the desk. Both men looked up with questioning grins as Lady May stepped from behind the section of book-shelves which silently swung back into place.

"Well? You have some news?"

"Stefanov is in London—probably got in from Paris this morning and has been trailing me during the afternoon."

"You have seen him?"

"No. It is understood between us that it is too dangerous, here—in case I'm followed at any time. But some one tossed this packet into my car during a traffic-jam this afternoon—couldn't have been anyone but Stefanov. He has managed to obtain compromising notes written by Navaletti, Lefourche, and Dumont—and some Japanese ideographs which I rather fancy would make Baron Sutoki commit harakiri if he knew they were in the hands of a third party. I can't read them myself, but this typed memoranda says the Baron will give, or promise, anything to get them back. He's in Paris, now, conferring with the French statesmen. There is also a note written by Sir John Merton, probably some years ago, before either he or the lady was married. There's no date. He was staying at the country-place subsequently inherited by the Viscount she married—the name is engraved on the top of the sheet. If it were shown to the Viscount today, he'd never have the ink tested to see how old it is—he'd place just the obvious construction upon it, probably divorcing his wife—and Sir John would resign his Government berth if matters didn't get as far as a shooting-affair. That makes four of the Cabinet men who carelessly wrote notes or had pictures taken long before they ever had a chance at a Government berth—perfectly harmless notes and pictures at the time, but a good bit more serious, now, if they happen to get into unscrupulous hands. Well, they've happened to get there, and those four men are squirming helplessly! As long as those bits of paper are in our hands, I doubt very much if they vote to sign that peace note or relax the opposition which is bringing the proposition to an *impasse*. I don't care to land in a hospital after some accident with these things on me—your safe is much the better place for them, Natovitch. It won't do to have them in Sandelmann's safe-deposit vaults—they might be raided some day, though it seems highly improbable."

"You and Stefanov are doing valuable work, Lady May! He has an account with Sandelmann upon which he draws up to a certain amount for what he accomplishes, but that's much too risky in your case. I can't think of any safer way to pay your money than what I suggested—give it to you in hundred-dollar notes, United States money, which are expressed to me direct from New York. Your bank in Paris accepts them for deposit at current exchange.

So I'll just hand you five thousand dollars, now—which, I believe, leaves a balance of ten thousand still due you. That will be paid later—by the end of the week."

TOUCHING a spring at the side of the fireplace, Natovitch swung out a section of the middle book-shelves, three feet wide, revealing the knob of a combination-lock set in the oak wainscoting behind the shelves—and, with it, opened the door of a concealed safe in the thickness of the wall. In a drawer of this, he placed the packet she had fetched; from another, he took fifty American banknotes, which he handed to her; then he closed the safe and swung the shelving back.

"Has Ernie Meltonhaugh, or Waite, said anything to you about admitting Earl Lammerford and Captain Enderbury as members?" inquired Lady May.

"We were just discussing them when you came in. Whose proposition was it?" Sandelmann asked.

"Meltonhaugh's, seconded by Jeff Waite, who wants to get a few millionaires where he can have an occasional game with them for high stakes. They were lunching with the Earl and Enderbury, who had heard of the club and asked if they ever had been there. Ernie says, by the way, that His Lordship broke the bank down in Monaco, a few years ago—and his friend, the Earl of Dyvnaint, also—"

"It is true—I have heard of that," volunteered Natovitch.

"Then—it would rather look as though Lammerford hoped there might be a quiet chance for big play at the club, sometime. Eh?" said Sandelmann thoughtfully.

"I do not know where he would get such ideas! He cannot have heard anything disreputable about the club."

"Probably it's the ultra-respectability which intrigues him," said Lady May. "He's too much a man-of-the-world—too much the big financier—to believe a club of this sort can be made to pay big money without something concealed under the surface. And he's in much too prominent a position as a Cabinet Minister to stir up any sort of exposure which would put him in a compromising light before the public."

"That argument is good for more than half of the Cabinet men, but not with the Premier, Dyvnaint, Lammerford, or Baron Abdool Mohammed. They're much too big men to stop for anything in the way of personal compromise—if it's a question of

something they think should be done. But every one of them is a dead-game sport. I don't think they're small enough to blab about any high play after indulging in it themselves. If they blabbed about anything it would be some action which they considered politically treasonable—and I can't see just how they could either suspect or prove anything of that sort against the club, or against any one of us. We might as well have a slice of their money."

"When are you going to give Melton-haugh and Jeff Waite a chance for a bit of 'Chemmie'—*rouge-et-noir*—roulette?"

"Tonight—if they want to stay late enough. We have but ten members of whom we're sure enough to fetch into this house—and there should be twice as many to make the club pay big money. We've tested out those two in various ways—both would have something to lose in the way of credit and reputation if they were caught in a raid here. In fact, I think neither Lammerford nor Enderbury would care to have anything of that sort in their case. We may let them come in here before long if they really want to play for blood."

"Somehow, I'm afraid of that genial, smiling Earl and his three most intimate friends—they're so frightfully powerful, socially and financially!" Lady May said rather doubtfully. "A lot of the Organization, over there in Paris, have suspected them at various times of blocking world-wide *coups* that were on the verge of being successful—but no shred of evidence has been found against them. It's more the certainty that they could and would do such things if they once started in to do them. If I knew, for example, that Lammerford had the least suspicion of what we're doing—well—I'd take the next boat for the States, I fancy—and manage to lose myself there!"

ON the third night following, Earl Lammerford and the Captain were fetched into the club as duly accredited members, by their two sponsors—and, after several dances with ladies to whom they were introduced, asked if they might obtain a private room for a supper with eight covers—Lady May Garston, the Honorable Annabel and two of their friends having agreed to be of the party.

There was no difficulty about the room or the supper—on the top floor of the building, with nothing between them and the steep-pitched roof but an attic, reached by

means of a ladder in a large closet. But after the supper—when His Lordship asked Lady May if there would be any objection to a little game of poker in that room, with the doors locked, she said that it was then nearly one in the morning—the club closed at two—everyone, including all the servants, being turned out of the building. She agreed, however, to ascertain from the management whether they could have an earlier supper next evening and play poker until closing time.

When they all came, next evening, they were informed that poker-playing in a room they had hired for supper would probably come under the same ruling as a private house—where the owner is privileged to gamble with his friends if he wishes to do so. Lady May had fetched in new packs of cards and celluloid chips. About midnight, five of them sat down to play at one end of the dinner-table, with the other three looking on.

The cards seemed to be running unusually high. When closing time arrived, the Earl was two thousand pounds ahead, and Waite, nine hundred; the rest were losers of various amounts. Most of Lammerford's two thousand had come from Waite, who merely grinned, and said he'd try to get it back next time.

LAMMERFORD made his home, when in the city, with his old friends the Earl and Countess of Dyvnaint, in Park Lane—but to provide for occasions when he wished to entertain or consult with various acquaintances, he maintained a luxuriously furnished apartment in one of the newer West End buildings—and it was to this that he had Martison drive him, with Enderbury, when they came out of the club. Before retiring, they had a final pipe while they discussed the various club members they had met.

"I'm getting more and more suspicious of those two women, John! They're fairly intimate with four of our Cabinet men and at least five in the French Cabinet. Nothing questionable, you understand—merely dining with them—being in their party at the opera or theater—motoring down to Richmond or some of the other road inns, with one of 'em. But it just happens that those nine men are the ones who are most set in their quiet an' plausible objections to signin' the peace note. I asked Lady May what she thought of it—saying that in our talks she had displayed an unusual under-

standing of political affairs. She said quite frankly that she didn't think either England or France should sign—and by Jove, she put up some clever argum'nts against signin'; but, d'y'e see, they weren't convincin' enough to make those Cabinet men take the stand they are takin'—just *because* of her views! Whatever argum'nts she may be usin' with 'em, are based upon something a dev'lish sight more personal than what she gave me."

"Have you formed any opinion about the club, as yet?"

"Oh—aye. There'll be an 'outer' circle and an 'inner' one among the members. Less than a dozen in the inner one, includin' the managem'nt—but that inner circle gambles every night or two with the lid off. Otherwise, they never could afford to run that place as it is run—the expense must be at least five figures, each month. I fancy they're testin' out and making inquiries about their members all the time. I happen to know that a number of the men are millionaires several times over—some of 'em on the same Boards with me. Well—some or all of those millionaires will belong to the inner circle, and those two women are pretty close to the management itself—if my observation's not at fault. In course of time, you and I will be invited to join that inner circle—but 'in-course-of-time' isn't soon enough! The peace note negotiations either will go through or else fail entirely within three months. If anything crooked is going on under the surface, we must know it inside of one month—to successfully side-track it. By the way, have you in mind the layout of that top floor?"

"Only in a general way—there wasn't much chance to investigate very thoroughly. That is—not yet."

"Then I seem to have a little the edge on you. At our first supper in that room, the other night, Lady May excused herself and went downstairs for something. The door was scarcely closed behind her when I jumped up and followed, saying I wanted a bit of information from her. Naturally, none of the rest of you butted in. She was out of sight when I got into the hall.

"There was nobody else on the floor, but I found a closet with a ladder. I had a square flashlight in my hip pocket. I went up the ladder, and found the roof-scuttle—hooked fast in two places. I unfastened the hooks but left 'em so they looked at a casual glance as if they were in the staples.

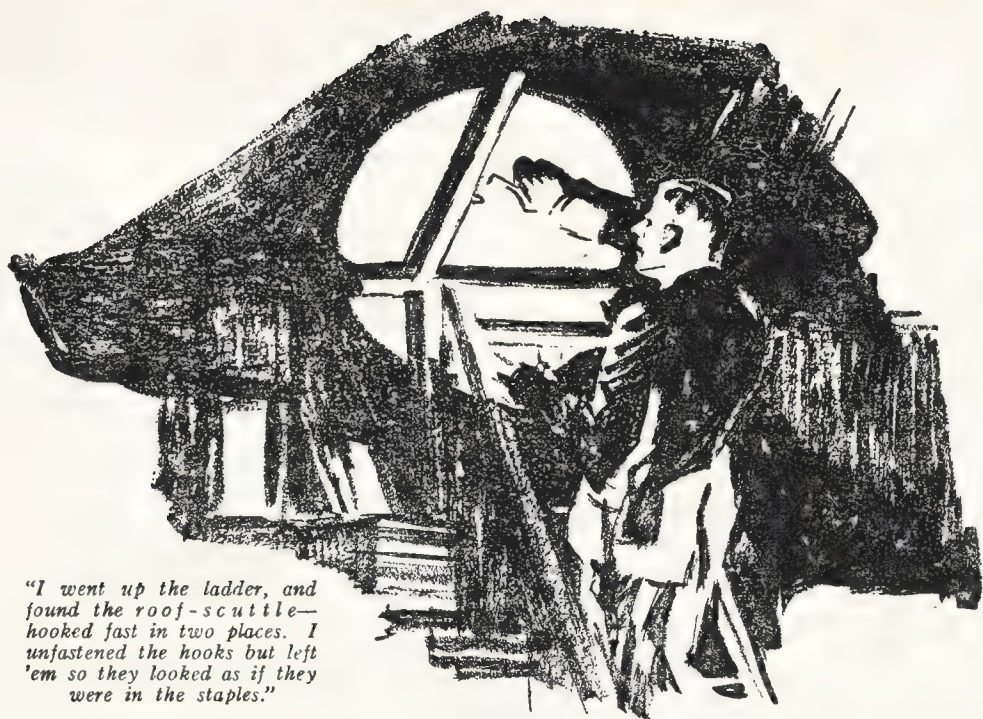
I was back in the supper-room before Lady May returned.

"Now, there is a vacant house in the block, and I took a year's lease of it yesterday—under another name. I'll have one of my men furnish it during the week and get two of the F. O. girls to stay there for a while at night, to give the appearance of a regular tenancy—windows lighted at night, and all that. Meanwhile, I want you to have two F. O. men watch the club every night, until morning—and the nearest six houses, each way, as well. What I'm after is a check-up on every man or woman who goes into that club every night—and how many come out again—anywhere on the block! Catch it?"

IN the morning, Lammerford sent Martison to the offices of the city surveyors for large-scale plans of some thirty blocks, north of Shaftesbury Avenue and east of Regent Street. These official plans not only showed the wall-lines of every building in the blocks, but also whether the walls were of brick, wood, stone or concrete, and of how many stories—all of the service connections being shown in separate colors. They were expensive—but worth more than they cost to anyone who wanted exact information.

At the end of the week, Enderbury reported a peculiar circumstance which had been observed by his men.

On Tuesday night, twenty-two women and thirty-five men had gone into the club between the hours of nine and midnight. At two in the morning, twenty-two women and thirty-two men had come out—also three cooks, four footmen, ten waiters, and two ladies'-maids, from the basement door, which was locked after them by some one inside—presumably the night caretaker. This left two men unaccounted for. On Wednesday night, twenty-four women and thirty-eight men went in—but only nineteen women and thirty-two men came out. All the servants came out—and tallied as before. Nobody afterward came out of any house in the block until six in the morning—and those who came then were most certainly residents of the various houses. Apparently, five women and six men had spent the night in the club—presumably were in it yet, for none of them came out during the day. Thursday evening, twenty-three women and thirty-six men went in—and the same number came out at two A. M. Next night, ten members



"I went up the ladder, and found the roof-scuttle—hooked fast in two places. I unfastened the hooks but left 'em so they looked as if they were in the staples."

seemed to spend the entire night in the club—none of them coming out again. By this time, the F. O. men were pretty sure as to the identity of those who remained.

When the Captain had explained all this in detail, His Lordship nodded in a satisfied way and showed him the surveyors' plan of that particular block.

"You'll notice, old chap, that I've marked with a cross the two buildings thrown together as the club, on Lexington Street, and the size of the gardens in the rear, which is the center of the block—each garden being twenty-four feet wide by sixty deep. Back of their rear walls, come the gardens of the houses on Great Pulteney Street, which appear to be a few feet longer—you'll notice I've marked with a red cross the two dwellings on Great Pulteney Street whose gardens abut those of the club on Lexington Street. Tonight—after the club is emptied at two o'clock—I want your men to go around into Great Pulteney Street and keep an eye on those two houses marked with the red cross—until noon, if necessary. If the missing members who don't come out of the club appear from either of these other houses any time before daybreak, your men needn't wait after they recognize 'em—that'll be all the information really necess'ry."

"Your Lordship fancies there may be a secret passage under those rear gardens?"

"Got to be—hasn't there? They go in

on Lexington Street an' they don't come out anywhere along that block. They certainly come out *somewhere!* Those houses in Great Pulteney Street are both owned by a Professor Maturin, a chemist an' biologist. He lives in one of them himself; the other has been vacant for several months. The eighth house from them, toward Beak Street, is also vacant—I've taken a year's lease. Didn't bother to furnish it, but I have the keys."

WHILE the Captain and his Foreign Office men were watching the dwellings on both streets, Earl Lámmerford had gone to Rome by airplane—remained there a day, conferring with an F. O. man whom he had written the week before, in code—then returned to Paris, where he spent a couple of days, and was back in London Friday evening. He went to the club with Enderbury that night—and took him home to his apartment after they left.

"Your Lordship was quite right about those two houses on Great Pulteney Street," said Enderbury. "Had it not been for your foresight in getting those block-plans from the city surveyors, I doubt very much if we'd have located the proper houses to watch. It's a long block with a large number of houses to be looked after all night—we might have tried it for months without actually identifying any of the club members. But upon two different mornings,

some eight or ten men and women came out of Professor Maturin's house at four A. M. and were hurried into a couple of motor-landaulets which had stopped at the curb a moment before—the cars starting off the second their doors were slammed shut. It looked to us as if three persons belonging to the club management were in charge of the others as they came out—were hustling them along for one obvious reason, and another not quite so much so. The obvious reason was to get them away in absolute silence in order that no attention should be attracted in the neighborhood. Another one, we fancied, might have been to prevent any of the party from getting much of a look up and down the block to figure out where they were or what street it was. We're of the impression that anyone who gets into Professor Maturin's house, for whatever their purpose may be, is conducted by some one belonging to the club management who doesn't let them see how doors are opened—where springs or switches may be touched. If any one of those members attempted to get through by himself or herself, he'd probably spend the night trying to get past the first door, and wouldn't have any accurate idea where the other house was."

"Undoubtedly that theory is correct, Enderbury—it's exactly what they'd do to protect themselves. How many of those who came out did you recognize?"

"Every one of them! Some, the first night—the rest, the second. The uninitiated ones were Meltonhaugh, Waite, five of the millionaires. Then there was Sandelmann the banker, who seemed to be hustling some into the first car—Lady May and the Honorable Annabel were doing the same with the men in the second car. Professor Maturin was standing at the front door until they drove away. Now comes a curious development. At ten in the morning, the Professor's niece, who keeps house for him, drove off in a very decent car with a thoroughly smart chauffeur, as if going for a shopping-trip—but she did not return to the house until late the next afternoon. Fifteen minutes after she left, a stout cook came out and walked to Shaftesbury Avenue, where she took a bus. Half an hour later, a butler and a maid came out—in street-clothes, of course—and walked away. Neither of the three came back to that house until after eight on the second evening following—the night when several of the club members were there.

"Professor Maturin himself left the house about noon of that first morning—and didn't come back at all, along Great Pulteney Street. But on that evening when the members were there again, he himself opened the front door to admit his niece—with the hall lights showing him up very plainly. Twice, I've had his telephone put on without getting any reply—a third time, a man's voice said it was the Professor speaking, but it wasn't like the one we heard at the front door. Then—here's a circumstance which doesn't match up with the rest of it: Yesterday and today, that house has been inhabited just like any other on the block. Deuced queer, I'd say!"

"ALL of this checks up with information I've just obtained in Paris and Rome," observed Lammerford. "The six Deputies who appear to be the obstructionists in the Italian Government have all been fairly thick with a man whom they call 'Stefanov,' and have been seen at different times with a woman who, by the description, was unquestionably the Honorable Annabel Darblay. In Paris the man Stefanov has been seen with the obstructionist Ministers—and Lady May has been seen by agents of the Prefecture going into a little house on the Rue Vanneau with this same Stefanov and your Professor Maturin. That house we know to be a rendezvous of the Red leaders throughout Europe. M'sieur *le Prefet* says the Professor's Vandyke and mustache are false ones. That being the case—from his general build and mannerisms—who would you say the Professor might be?"

"Oh, I say! I'd not thought of that! Natovitch—of course. Circumstantial, d'ye see—but I fancy he can't be logically, anyone else."

"Well—that's the way I sized him up. The Prefect had three pictures—snapshots, but excellent ones, properly timed—one of them full length. I've not seen the Professor—but I've seen Natovitch—and one man was wearing the other's clothes. Now—the residuum of this is an unquestionable plot—supposedly based upon blackmail—against certain Cabinet men in four different countries. Lady May and the other women would be cast in the siren role—presumably hypnotists and pickpockets—probably with nerve enough to enter a man's rooms and search 'em—carryin' chloroform about 'em in case of emergency. Stefanov would be the active go-between, and prob-

ably the man who has managed to obtain most of the incriminating documents and information. But I fancy there's no doubt at all as to Natovitch and Sandelmann being the spiders in the center of the web. Sandelmann's banking business must be worth a lot to foreign governm't agents; Natovitch is the obvious one to keep the data with which they're working. It might

we'll be taken through the passage, if there is such a thing, for a night of play—we'll pick up something which'll show us how to get through when the buildings are empty."

"You'd best look a bit farther ahead, John! There are doubtless very strong doors at each end of that passage and probably in the middle—doors we couldn't possibly force without acetylene torches. Also,



They located the scuttle of the Professor's house. This Jerrock slowly forced up until the hook underneath pulled its staple.

be safer for him to keep it in the vaults of some big well-known bank—but he couldn't get at anything on Sundays or bank holidays, and that'd seriously interfere with his operations. If he's sufficiently implicated, Scotland Yard could prevent access to his safe-deposit box. With the club and those other two houses, he has a layout in which he could have contrived a safety-vault of his own, very easily—where he can strip it at a moment's notice. The club might be raided at any time for gambling or liquor-law violation—obviously, that wouldn't be a desirable place for his safe. But this house of Professor Maturin's is something else again. We suspect an underground passage between it and the club, but we've never seen it and if it does exist it's not unlawful. We've not a shred of evidence, in fact, upon which we could obtain a search-warrant. But I'm convinced and I fancy you are too, Enderbury, that there are documents in that building which we must get into our possession in order to prevent a political conspiracy from destroying something the world needs most damnably. Question is, how to get 'em!"

"I fancy it's but a week or so before

there'll be a caretaker somewhere about—unquestionably he's one of the more unscrupulous members of the gang—a bounder who'd not hesitate to use a knife or pistol. Well, d'y'e see, that bird would hear us gettin' in, an' lay low. If we did succeed in locating the switches or springs and got into that underground passage—he'd quietly fasten those strong doors behind us, then run around the block into the Professor's house, fasten the others at that end, and shut off the ventilating ducts. There we'd be—caught underground like rats in a trap—very likely they've means of flooding it to prevent the police getting through in case of a raid. And there they'd leave us until we passed out. Personally—I don't fancy that silly kind of a death very much. No—we'll get into the Professor's house from the top—and we'll need an expert cracksman—one so good that he can open the combination-lock of an average safe by listening to the fall of the tumblers. Have you such a chap?"

"Fancy that'll be more in the line of Scotland Yard—but Chief Inspector Far-

rell of the C. I. D. is an old pal of mine—do anything in reason. I'll see him in the morning and find out what we can dig up. I say! Without evidence or proof, it'll be a rather serious proposition, you know—breaking into a private house! Hadn't Your Lordship best keep out of it?"

"It may be *your* only chance for safety if I stay in, John! We'll have four or five F.O. men outside the house—ready to come barging in if we call 'em—we'll take a good one with us and the cracksman. May be a rotten scandal before we get through, but if we get what we're after, nobody'll know anything about it—outside of those immediately int'rested in one side or the other."

TWO evenings later, Inspector Farrell of the C.I.D. called at the Lexington Street house which Earl Lammerford had leased, accompanied by Captain Enderbury and a middle-aged man of respectable appearance. When they were taken to His Lordship, in a study at the rear of the parlor floor, the Inspector introduced this man.

"This will be Harvey Jerrock, Your Lordship—formerly a designer and master mechanic in the employ of a well-known safe manufacturing company. I understand through the Captain, here, that you wish him to break into a private house and open a safe in it, if there happens to be one—both criminal offenses, of course. What's the excuse for it—if any?"

"Getting evidence as to successful blackmailing of members of four different Governm'ts, Inspector. We know it's being done—seriously interfering with the functioning of those Governm'ts. We fancy we know where the docum'ts are which they're holding over those men. My suggestion would be that we pay Mr. Jerrock what he considers a fair price for the risk he runs—and that if your men should arrest him, he shall be given an opportunity to escape."

"Oh, I fancy Jerrock would manage to get away, somehow, before we got him as far as the Yard! But I hope you manage so that he's not caught in the act—he's an expert we'd much prefer keeping inside the law. Very good, sir. We'll have men within call if needed."

Jerrock thought he should have five hundred pounds, which sum was given him before they started out. Then Lammerford, Enderbury, Jerrock and Lieutenant Brand of the F.O. went around to the vacant house he had leased on Great Pulteney Street, going quietly in at the door when nobody else

was in sight and ascending noiselessly to the roof. As the niece and the servants had left before noon, and the Professor soon afterward, they were fairly sure there would be nobody else in the two houses that night unless the caretaker came through the passage from the club to see that everything was all right, as they thought he might possibly do. It was then half-past two in the morning—the patrons of the club had departed sometime before.

Crawling silently across the intervening houses on the rear side of the steeply pitched roofs, so that nobody could make them out against the skyline from the street, they located the scuttle of the Professor's house. This, Jerrock slowly forced up with a jimmy until the hook underneath pulled its staple out of the partly rotten wood of the coaming. There was no noise which could have been heard on the top floor even had the door at the foot of the ladder been open. But before lifting up the scuttle-cover, Jerrock ran his fingers around the coaming and hinges, feeling for possible electric connections. As it happened, there were none.

ON the top floor, the Earl took a couple of small audiphones from his pockets, handed one to Enderbury, put the receivers of the other over his ears, and held the microphone-transmitter tightly against the stair-rail. Instantly, a number of little house-noises which had been but a faint rustling became magnified to the rumbling of powerful machinery. Two mice, gnawing somewhere at the woodwork, sounded as loud as a carpenter's saw. Insects on the floors made a slithering sound like shot or sand swishing across a newspaper. A dripping faucet sounded like water spurting into a tub under pressure. Had there been a human footstep in the house, it would have been unmistakable. There was no sign of gambling equipment anywhere—but after a little study of walls and storage-space in the vacant though luxuriously furnished house, Jerrock found a spring in what seemed to be a shallow closet at the rear of the hall and swung its rear wall around on a pivot, revealing a space which contained roulette-wheels, *rouge-et-noir* table-tops in sections, and other gambling accessories.

Posting Lieutenant Brand in the hall of the Professor's house to warn them if anyone seemed to be coming in, His Lordship set Jerrock to examining the bookshelves along the abutment in the library. In a moment he said that a section of them un-

doubtedly swung out on a cantilever—in another three minutes, he located the spring and proved it. Five minutes more, and he had found the connection which swung the wainscoting back and took them into the small closet at the top of the stair. Placing the Captain there to listen for anyone coming up from the passage, Lammerford then asked the expert where he thought a concealed safe would be located in such a room. Without hesitation, Jerrock pointed to the fireplace abutment from the south wall.

"I'd say on the right-hand side, sir, because the chimney-flues take a left turn just above—and I'm familiar with book-shelving as a means of concealment. Eh? . . . Here we've it, sir. A three-foot width on four shelves—which I swing out, as you see. And there's the combination-knob! Now—I've something in the line of a medico's stethoscope which I find quite handy. 'Alf a mo', now—an' we sha'n't be long!"

With the stethoscope against the vernier round the knob, he twisted it daintily this way and that—listening intently as he did so. In two minutes, the door of the safe swung open.

The Earl wasted no time in compliments or speculation. He simply made a clean sweep of everything in that safe—including two locked compartments and four drawers which Jerrock easily opened.

They had shoved the staple into the scuttle-coaming again and fastened the hook when they came down, so there was no evidence that anyone had gotten in that way.

Restoring everything, now, exactly as they had found it, the four walked casually out of the front door as if they were living in the house, closed it after them, and walked along up the block to the corner of Beak Street, where they got into His Lordship's car and drove away without being followed or observed.

SCARCELY had the door of Professor

Maturin's house closed when Natovitch came through the passage and up into his library. After making sure that he was alone in the building, he opened his safe. When he saw the startling emptiness inside, he quietly and quickly left the house—without even adjusting his professorial beard. In the morning, he was on the first Channel boat to Boulogne. With no idea whatever as to who could have betrayed them, there was nobody he dared see until he had more data—he expected to feel a hand on his shoulder at any moment!

NEXT day, Lammerford and Enderbury called upon Inspector Farrell at New Scotland Yard. Neither he nor his men had been in evidence along Great Pulteney Street, but they knew he naturally would be curious, and expecting an explanation. They told him that certain papers, books and money had been taken from Professor Maturin's house and lodged in one of the Foreign Office vaults—that the Professor, who was actually Serge Natovitch of a commercial house in Queen Victoria Street, *might* apply there for some of the loot—provided that he could accurately describe it, prove unquestionable ownership, and right to have it in his possession; also provided that he was willing to risk immediate arrest as the manager of an illegal gambling-club, with criminal prosecution resulting.

That afternoon, His Lordship called upon Sir John Merton at his home in Kensington. Handing him a long sealed envelope of very tough paper, with his name typed upon the outside, Lammerford said:

"Sir John, that envelope was found by Foreign Office men last night in a nest of blackmailers, here in London—along with three other similar envelopes addressed to as many of our confrères in the Cabinet. Sir Austen feels that there is a possibility of the contents being personal property of yours, stolen from you at some time or other, and therefore that neither this nor either of the other three envelopes should be opened by anyone except the person whose name appears upon it. Will you kindly examine whatever is inside—see whether it really is your property or whether there is anything which should be returned to the F.O.? I'll be glancin' over some of your books while you're going through the lot."

In a few moments, Merton looked up from his desk with a noticeably paler face.

"Your Lordship, I am certainly under obligations to you and Sir Austen for this courtesy and consideration upon your part! These papers *are* my property—but they were stolen from a very dear friend of many years ago, who will be exceedingly thankful to know they have been recovered. I trust that some opportunity may occur in which I may show my appreciation of this!"

Within the next fortnight, there were twenty-two other interviews of a similar nature in London, in Paris, and in Rome.

It is now generally understood that the peace note will be signed, very soon, by representatives of fifteen World Powers, in Paris.



The Hidden Trail

Illustrated by William Molt

COLD winds roared in Dick Johnson's ears as he leaned forward in the saddle of his tired horse, peering ahead into the utter blackness of a brush-covered land of broken hills and gullies. Sparks danced suddenly on a hillside up ahead—pistol-shots.

There was no apparent reason for gunfire in this wild and lonely country. There were no settlements, no pastures, no roads, nothing but a party of surveyors plunging into the wilderness. The shots puzzled Dick Johnson—alias "Red," because of his flaming hair. Urging his animal forward, he came finally to a point near a dimly lighted tent in the brush, where he dismounted.

There was no more gunfire. The land was quiet except for the sough of the wind. Wrapping his ragged brown overcoat tighter around his thin overalls and thinner blue shirt, he walked forward cautiously.

A nervous patrol with a pistol appeared out of the brush.

"Halt!" yelled the sentry. "Who is it?"

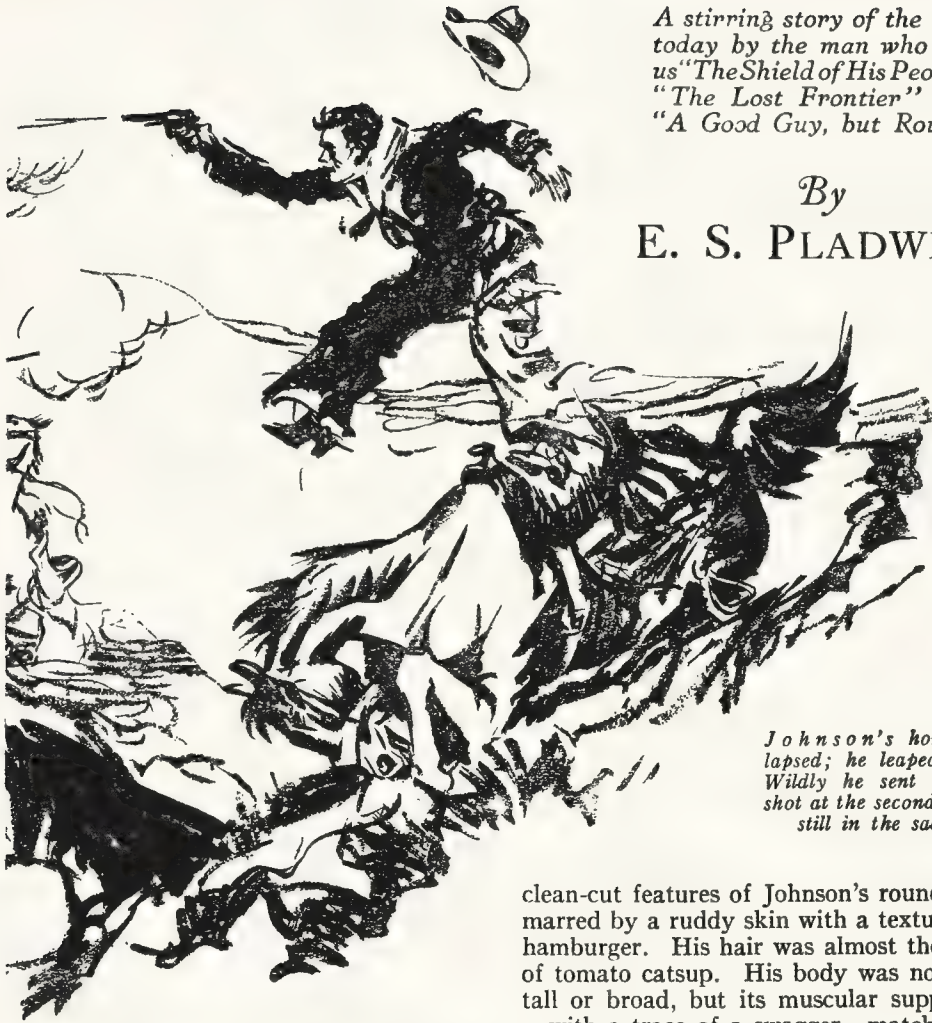
"Stranger," said Johnson, though holding the butt of the six-shooter at his right hip.

"Stranger! Who are you? What you doing here?"

"Lookin' for a job with your survey-crew."

"My God, what next? Come forward, you! March toward that light!"

RED JOHNSON quickly found himself in the presence of a half-dozen tousled young men in khaki, gathered around a folding table in a brown tent which bellied in the wind. A lantern gleamed on the table—perhaps unwisely. It threw yellow light up into the fine-looking faces of educated youngsters who gazed at the stranger curiously. So did a neat little man at the



A stirring story of the West today by the man who gave us "The Shield of His People," "The Lost Frontier" and "A Good Guy, but Rough."

By
E. S. PLADWELL

Johnson's horse collapsed; he leaped away. Wildly he sent his last shot at the second fellow, still in the saddle.

end of the table. His pointed beard flashed like gold in the lamplight. His sharp blue eyes glinted from behind powerful spectacles at the newcomer.

Johnson's captor spoke resentfully, holding a nicked revolver:

"This may be one of the yahoos who shot up the camp!"

"Aw, go soak your head!" snapped Johnson, whirling upon him. "I told you I came for a job! I chased this survey-party half across Arizona as soon as I heard about it, in Yuma!"

The men looked at each other.

"In Yuma?" repeated the little Chief.

"Yes sir. A friend in the Southwestern Railroad tipped me off. So I thought maybe I'd find a job. Winter's comin' on."

The Chief's piercing eyes studied the

clean-cut features of Johnson's round face, marred by a ruddy skin with a texture like hamburger. His hair was almost the color of tomato catsup. His body was not very tall or broad, but its muscular suppleness—with a trace of a swagger—matched the unabashed expression of his face.

"Enterprise!" exclaimed the Chief. "What enterprise! And this survey into the Malapah Valley was supposed to be done quietly!"

A SHOT rang out in the brush.

Every man but the Chief went to the open tent-flap. There seemed to be a vocal argument out there, muffled by the screech of the gale. Then two men gradually appeared in the light. One was the tall mule-wrangler for the outfit. Nobody looked at him. The other was big, bearded, grim and surly. His suspicious little brown eyes peered out from under the brim of a dirty black hat. An old black coat, with its collar up around his neck, rippled in the wind.

"Jesse James himself!" snickered a young surveyor.

"It may not be so funny," reprimanded the Chief, quietly. "Come in, my man!"

The fellow slouched past the tent-flap, blinking around at the crowd before he unbuttoned his overcoat, revealing a six-shooter pendant from a belt gleaming with deadly copper cylinders. His right hand grasped the butt of the gun.

"We told you fellas to go back!" he bawled in a husky voice. "This is the last warnin'. We've just gave you snoops a taste of what we can do. We aint lookin' for no trouble, but if you drifters don't hit back north tomorrow mornin', we're likely to git rough!"

"This is a survey-party sent out by the Southwestern Railroad," retorted the Chief, stiffly. "We intend to go over the ridge and then down into the Malapah."

"I don't give a damn what you intend! Git out!"

"But why?"

"Never mind why. I'm tellin' yuh!"

There was a moment of hesitation. Red Johnson grinned toward the dour visitor.

"You don't want to have your private cattle-trails *mapped*, do you?" remarked Johnson innocently.

The fellow whipped out his six-shooter, bringing up its muzzle toward Johnson's stomach. "You lie!" he roared.

Johnson slowly elevated his hands toward his shoulders, but his face showed a queer white streak around the mouth.

"You're brave," he whispered, "when you're behind a gun!"

"You take what you get!"

A fist caught the fellow squarely in the back of the neck. He had neglected to remember the young men standing behind him. He crumpled like a meal-sack. The pistol fell out of his hand.

"So do you!" grunted a blond young surveyor.

"Ferris!" groaned the Chief, coming forward. "You idiot, haven't you better sense than to make matters worse? Here, my man! Get up! I'm sorry this has happened, but you shouldn't have been so insolent. Get up!"

THE fellow staggered to his feet. He glared around, and then his voice roared out, savage with rage:

"Damn you—you damned snoopin' tenderfeet! Now you'll git what's comin' to you! Insolent! Insolent! Hell, I'll show

you who's insolent! Ya-a-ah! I'll fix you, all right! Wait! Just wait! Gimme my gun!"

Johnson emptied the cylinders and handed him the empty pistol, earning an ugly glare from the snapping little eyes. "And you—" The man checked himself, and walked straight out into the brush.

There was a long silence.

The Chief gazed at his men, one by one—Harry Channing, the gaunt assistant; Tom Ferris and Buster Dayton, the chainmen; Jim Lawton, the muscular rodman; Krackenburger, the cook who always needed a shave; Martin Short, the big packer; little Ike Gonzales, the Mexican assistant packer; and lastly, the red-headed cowpuncher from Yuma. The Chief cleared his throat.

"Hum! We seem to have stumbled into danger. I must urge that anyone who wishes may turn back honorably before it is too late."

Not a man moved.

"I cannot ask any of you to continue with me," insisted the Chief. "I could turn back, of course, but I do not intend to go to town, with my tail between my legs, telling a story that some pistol-toting vagabonds frightened me out of the country. I have never failed yet. I do not intend to begin now. However, I must not ask you gentlemen to accept this risk."

There was silence. Then Ferris chirped: "All right, Chief. Don't ask it."

The Chief smiled wryly. "I understand, gentlemen. Thank you. But let us protect ourselves at all times. Be wary. As for this gentleman, Mr. —"

"Six-shooter Red!" bantered Ferris.

"Johnson," said that gentleman, who began to admire the Chief immensely.

"Very well. We must welcome you, Mr. Johnson. We welcome anyone who can add to our strength. You and Mr. Short and Mr. Gonzales will please act as patrols hereafter, day and night, to guard us against unpleasant surprises. Is that satisfactory to you?"

"Yep. Fine," agreed the grinning cowpuncher.

A bullet tore through the top of the tent, drilling two neat holes under the ridge-pole. A shot was heard from afar. The Chief looked up, frowned, and nodded courteously to the men.

"That is all for tonight, gentlemen. Thank you."

Then he blew out the light.

CAMP was struck next morning, in the cold air of dawn, under low-hanging gray clouds.

Ten pack-mules were laden swiftly with food, blankets, the tent, and the kitchen stove. The Chief set up his theodolite-transit, then suddenly took it off its tripod.

"We'll change our methods, Jim," he said to Channing. "No more transits or levels. We'd better do this traverse in a hurry. We'll use the plane-table. It's not so precise, but it's quicker. Do everything by intersection."

"What's intersection?" asked Johnson, saddling his horse near by.

Channing explained: "You sight toward a mountain with your alidade—a little telescope mounted on a steel ruler—and you draw a pencil line in that direction on the plane-table. Then you go ahead a few miles and sight again at the same mountain. The mountain's position on the map must be where the two lines intersect, see?"

That was all Red Johnson ever learned about surveying.

He mounted and rode ahead of the pack-train which, led by a bony old white mare, began to swing into line for a march which would keep just ahead of the surveyors. The course was southwest, toward great mountains of gray-green brush. Johnson plunged through soft-dirt knolls and gullies. He swung to the left gradually to guard the flanks of the pack-train.

Suddenly he came out of a little cañon toward a ten-foot hillock. Two men were lying on their stomachs in front of their horses. Both were sighting rifles over the hillock toward the camp.

"Up!" he yelled, grabbing his six-shooter.

They turned toward him. The foremost man relaxed his grip on his rifle. The other swung his weapon around, pulling trigger.

Johnson beat him to it. His six-shooter thumped out three slugs of lead before the rifle belched at him. Then Johnson fired twice more.

The air crackled with quick, vehement explosions. The two snorting horses whirled around and galloped wildly down the gully. The fellow with the rifle fired again, but his aim was erratic. His chest ran red. The other cowered away from the hail of lead before grabbing the butt of his rifle again.

With sinking heart, Johnson realized that his five shots were expended. He never carried but five.

Swinging his horse around desperately, he jabbed spurs into its flanks while leaning low on the saddle. The spurs caused the cow-pony to buck like a rocket, which was lucky. Blasts of lead sang past as the ducking, bouncing Johnson went around the corner of the cañon and out of sight, gaining control of his pony gradually. Then he halted and reloaded his six-shooter.

"One down!" he gasped. "Gosh, now it's war!"

He galloped back toward the remains of the camp, passing the pack-train and its shouting riders. He rushed alongside the Chief and Channing, who were working at their plane-table.

"Keep together!" he implored. "They're tryin' to ambush you! I just shot one of 'em!"

The Chief tossed down a pencil.

"Shot one!" he groaned. "That will make them vindictive! The fools! The maniacs! What do I care about their cattle-trails? If they'd kept quiet, I might never have noticed them!" He whirled toward Channing. "Jim! You and the boys go back! I can't risk your lives this way! I'll do this job alone!"

"Go to the devil," retorted the tall assistant.

The Chief's jaw clamped bitterly.

"All right, Jim. I understand. You and I will stay with the table, then. The other boys will keep behind cover, but close enough for mutual assistance. In this way we will have a protective cordon around us. Hold back the pack-train. Mr. Johnson, kindly scout around to the left. Our next turning-point will be that high knoll yonder, about a mile ahead, southwest."

Calmly the little Chief shouldered his tripod with its plane-table, and Channing strode alongside.

AGAIN the red-headed cowpuncher galloped forward, but slackened speed when he plunged into a tangle of knolls and thick underbrush where he traveled cautiously, scanning every part of the bushes and the sky-line.

Slowly, tense as a hair-trigger, he swung farther to the left, into hills which were chalkier than the others. He came to a little knoll of thorny chaparral. Seeing no enemy, he urged the unwilling horse through it, forcing the animal to gather momentum. Then he yanked it straight backward on its haunches.

It danced at the edge of a sheer precipice!

The astonished rider sat motionless, peering down upon a deep and silent cañon of limestone walls. The hard-pan floor was completely roughened by the hoof-marks of countless cattle which had marched through this cañon toward another county far to the northeast. It was a hidden trail—a secret highway where stolen stock had been driven by bands of rustlers, perhaps for decades!

"My gosh!" he cried, in awe. "No wonder they'll shoot!"

A MAN'S head and shoulders appeared over the top of a hummock at Johnson's right.

Silently the fellow drew a six-shooter. His thin face showed a satirical smile as he leveled the pistol at the red-headed rider inspecting the scene below. There were no moving shadows on the ground to betray the presence of the newcomer. The low-hanging gray clouds obscured the sunlight.

"Up!" he barked.

Johnson whirled in the saddle. His right hand jerked downward but he changed his mind instantly. His arms elevated.

The other stepped out of the brush, taking his six-shooter away.

"Nice view," taunted the fellow.

"Yeh, and lots o' money in it," agreed Johnson, with a wry grin.

"Uh-huh. But not for snoops and spies. They git somethin' else."

"Well, what, for instance?"

The other frowned.

"Dammit, we can't afford to have you people snoopin' around here!" he exploded, savagely. "We can't afford it! Hell, do you think we want to git *mapped*? But we can't let you go back, either. I guess I'll take you in. Let the boss decide!"

"Where?"

"Nemmind where. Git on my horse. He knows the way home. I'll follow on yours. Stand still!"

The fellow took a hair-rope from his saddle, binding Johnson's hands behind him. A red bandanna was fastened around his eyes and head.

"That aint necessary," objected Johnson.

"You've seen plenty already!" retorted the other.

A shot sounded from the direction of the pack-train—then another. There was no wind today. Sounds traveled far. Johnson longed to assist his friends in khaki, but he was forced to ride drearily

in darkness for hour after hour, mile after mile, until his horse was halted among strange men who greeted his captor.

Johnson was allowed to dismount. The bandanna was taken from his eyes.

He found himself alongside a big tumble-down structure of unpainted boards. It stood under the shadow of a gray cliff which arose straight up behind it. The hard whitish soil in front of it was printed with the marks of innumerable hoofs. Facing the big house was a smithy or supply-shop with boards falling apart from age. At the ends of both buildings were horse-corrals. Beyond the smithy was a greenish field where the cañon widened. Cattle grazed out there.

Several hard-looking men surrounded Johnson. The men, the horses, and the two buildings reminded him of the main street of a little town, but he had no time to inspect it.

A medium-sized man in overalls, jacket and high-heeled boots came to the main building's doorway.

Johnson found himself looking up into a hawklike face whose snapping brown-black eyes numbed the onlooker by their dynamic intensity. The fellow's chin receded into a scrawny neck but his curved nose was like the beak of a bird of prey. His decorated gun-holster was strapped down on his thigh.

"Well, well, well?" he yelped, irritably, at Johnson's captor. "Who's this?"

"He's from the survey crowd."

"He is, is he? Well, we aint here to feed surveyors! You fool, you half-wit, so you had to bring him *here*! Hell! What are we goin' to do with him?"

"I dunno," admitted the other.

"Well, you'd better find out!" Hawk-eyes nodded to Johnson, looking him over. "Come in, you!"

THE captive was hustled inside, though his arms ached from their bindings. The interior of the house was dark and dirty, littered with mattresses, old blankets, and bits of wearing apparel. Its odor was sour.

The men—a scurvy gang with rumpled clothes but well-oiled weapons—crowded around Johnson and the leader. These were no plains-riders. Their equipment was heavier than the ordinary cowpuncher's, because of the hills and the brush. Most of them wore leather "chaps," shiny and thoroughly scratched. Their six-shooters were snug against their hips. Two of

them had tight-fitting leather jackets. Most of the saddles, on pegs on the wall, were double-cinched, with breech-straps and with heavy leather tapaderos. These men were a rougher breed than the riders of the plains, and therefore more dangerous. Their visages were sullenly reckless.

"Well?" snapped Hawk-eyes. "Who are you? What's your game?"

The rustler's sardonic gaze swept over his captive's costume—the red neckerchief, the high-heeled boots, the big spurs.

"No," said the rustler, softly. "I don't blame *that* on yuh. No. You didn't start the survey but it was right handy for you to get aboard of, wasn't it?"



The man's thin face showed a satirical smile as he leveled the pistol at the red-headed rider. "Up!" he barked. Johnson whirled in the saddle.

Johnson resented the fellow's shrill urgency.

"I represent the Southwestern Railroad," he retorted, with hauteur. "They're goin' to map the Malapah country!"

"Well, they wont."

"Wont they? Say, does a big railroad company quit because a few ornery gents in the hills don't want their pet cattle-trails to get mapped? Wake up!"

"But—dammit—you've got us up against a wall!"

"Well, don't blame it on me," growled Johnson.

"How? What do you mean?"

The rustler came closer. His eyes were fierce as living flames.

"Clever, aint yuh? Clever! You people—Charley Wright and the Cattlemen's Association—couldn't get at us from the Malapah country, so you sneaked in from the north, under the coat-tails of a survey-party, eh? Clever, eh? A cattleman with a survey-party! Huh! You spy, you sneak, you damned treacherous skunk, you snivelin' detective, now we've got yuh!"

As soon as he could find coherent voice, the amazed Red Johnson launched into such vehement denials that his captors finally slapped him down into a corner of the shanty while they conferred.

He heard scraps of talk concerning what they had done to other "spies." He knew he was close to execution. These rustlers were dour, brutal hill-billies whose terror

would make them pitiless. He wondered why they didn't shoot him offhand, but discovered that Hawk-eyes wanted to wait till more of the gang could see it.

Johnson, with a gone feeling in his stomach, remained in his corner. His arms were still bound but his long journey had loosened the ropes somewhat. He worked on them desperately till his arms came free.

Dusk came, but no supper. One of the gang kicked him methodically and then shambled off to the candle-lit table where the rest were finishing their meal. The fellow's shadow came between the light and the captive.

Johnson, battered and savage, jumped to his feet. He thrust his bindings away. There was an old chair at his left. In front of him was a closed end-window looking out upon a horse-corral. He grabbed the chair, smashed the pane, and dived upward over the window-sill, taking splinters of glass with him.

WITH a howl, the diners jumped up, reaching for their six-shooters. Their table went over with a crash. Tin dishes clattered to the floor, but the noise was drowned by the thunderous concussions of guns which flamed at the window like blasts of lightning.

Johnson tumbled into the corral head-first.

Luckily the boards of the house were thick, but even so, they were splintering. Toothpicks of wood jumped from the window-sash. One gashed his cheek. * He ducked, looking around.

Snorting ponies were cowering at the other end of the twenty-foot corral. Its three gate-bars were up. He leaped for them.

A voice howled from the house: "Git outside!"

Johnson slammed down two of the bars, stepping aside. Five terror-stricken horses rushed to the entrance. He ran with the nearest one, grasping its mane as he sprang upon its back. He pulled its mane to the right, down the cañon, away from the house.

The other animals followed with a rush.

Pistol-shots crackled from the doorway and the nearest window. The cañon echoed with their frantic staccato *bang-bang-bang*! Johnson crouched low. Bullets whistled and hummed all around him. A pony alongside him plunged headlong to the ground.

"Get him!" screamed a voice. "Dammit, we've got to! Got to!"

But Johnson raced around a turn of the cañon. The tricky semi-darkness had saved him. So had the running ponies, adding to the confusion. He clattered onward with them.

An armed horseman loomed in front of him.

The little stampede swept down upon the fellow, rushing past before he found his wits. Then, yelling, he banged away with his six-shooter, as he started in pursuit. The ponies became utterly terrified. Their ears laid straight back. Their hoofs spurned the ground.

Johnson saw a cleft in the wall of the cañon ahead. It was brushy. Easy to climb. He tugged at his animal's head toward a rock, causing the pony to falter for a moment. He slid off and slapped it on the rump and the pony scuttled away after its companions.

Swiftly Johnson commenced to climb. The land was darker. Soon he was able to hear a raging, swearing cavalcade of riders clattering along below him in pursuit of the frightened ponies.

HE slept in a gully, far from the dangerous cañon. At dawn he started north-east, laboring through brushy hills, keeping vigilant watch for his enemies.

It was late afternoon before he approached a plane-table on a green knoll. It was almost sunset when he got there.

"Johnson!" exclaimed the Chief, staring at the battered figure. "Where have you been?"

"Visitin'."

"Visiting a hamburger-machine!" added young Ferris, coming over from the unloaded pack-train near by.

"What happened?" demanded the Chief.

Johnson told him. The whole crowd came to hear. The Chief tugged at his beard. His eyes gleamed irritably behind their spectacles.

"The idiots!" he cried. "The confounded pests! Why can't these Alkali Ikes—these Two-gun Jakes—these Six-shooter Mikes of Bloody Gulch—go back to their dime-novels and let us alone? How can we persuade them?"

"Get 'em jobs in a Wild West show," suggested the grinning Ferris, taking a pose. "Step up, gents, and get your tickets! The only genu-wine gang of howling, hell-roaring, man-killing bandits on exhibition in

America, captured at great expense in the wild and woolly West! Fifteen—count 'em, fifteen—and all for a dime, ten cents, a tenth of a dollar! Step up, gents! Get your tickets at the box-office!"

Johnson's weary face puckered with consternation as he realized the viewpoint of these engineers. Though worried and shaken, they still regarded their fearful peril as a mere nuisance, part of the job. They were blind to its real menace. They belittled it. One of them was even kidding it. They were sensible enough to be watchful—this camp was a natural fortress—but all they cared about was their work, which was leading straight toward annihilation!

"You're crazy!" yelled Johnson. "You don't understand! You're likely never to get out of this country alive!"

They looked at each other, puzzled.

"But we can't abandon our survey," said the little Chief, mildly.

"Then you've only got one chance!"

"What's that?"

Johnson pointed toward the great mountains ahead. "You can't go back. You can't go forward. You're stuck! I'm goin' down to the Malapah to stir up the ranchers before it's too late! Wherever there's rustlers, there's hostile cattlemen lookin' for 'em. We'll get 'em together! Let 'em fight. Keep 'em occupied. Gimme some grub, a horse, and one of your toy pistols!"

DESPITE the jocular comments of Tom Ferris, Johnson started away at midnight, after a nap, hoping to ride through the cordon of enemies lurking around the camp; but brush and treacherous ravines made progress so slow that he hardly went three miles before dawn.

In the light of a silver-gray sunrise, he saw two riders on a hillside to the westward.

He plunged into brushy gullies which sheltered him somewhat. He went fast. Once he was forced to go over a high knoll against the skyline, but he passed it quickly, hoping not to be recognized. He went downhill into a gully which deepened into a ravine.

Then, as he loped along the side of a chalky knoll, two burly riders in overcoats came suddenly around it.

There was surprise, consternation, mutual recognition. All three men yanked their horses back. Johnson, desperate and therefore quick, was first to draw. His thirty-two-caliber revolver spat like lightning, three times, before the two riders' big

six-shooters were leveled at him. One of them faltered.

Johnson's pistol spat again.

Two thunderous explosions leaped at him from the second fellow. The first one had reeled, shot through the throat.

JOHNSON'S horse collapsed under him. He leaped away. Another concussion nearly blew his left ear off. Wildly he sent his last futile shot at the second fellow, who was still in the saddle. Then he jumped toward the nearer man, who had rolled off.

Dodging, writhing, he bent down and grabbed the fellow's pistol, lying in a pool of blood. A shot from the horseman—at point-blank range—plowed a furrow into the fleshy part of Johnson's right thigh. With a yelp he hopped away, bringing up the gun, sending two shots at the fellow whose dancing horse spoiled the aim of both men.

The fellow sent his last shot past Johnson's shoulder, then whirled around in the smoke, jamming a spur deeply in the horse's flank. It went seesawing up the cañon while its rider bawled excitedly:

"It's him! It's him! My God, he's gettin' away! He's spreadin' the news!"

Johnson grabbed the reins of the other horse before it could follow. He sent his last shot at the bouncing rider disappearing over a hillock. The rider's voice still echoed against the hillside: "He's gettin' away! My God, he's gettin' away!"

Then silence, except a faint gurgle as the man on the ground expired.

The panting Johnson laid the fellow's hat over his head, took his cartridge-belt, and leaped into the saddle of the new horse, a bony black.

"Yeh!" he breathed. "I'd damn' well better get away!"

He bound his leg quickly with a handkerchief as he speeded through the brush, gradually uphill. He rode for three hours but saw no enemies. His pony grew tired and sweaty from the long, fast pull through soft-rock cañons and over brushy hillocks, but he urged it up a deep ravine and finally over the shoulder of a great mountain overlooking the whole wild country behind him.

Distant black objects moved in the brush to the northward and eastward. They were spreading out. It was like a rabbit-drive. Those on the eastward flank traveled fastest. The going was easier.

Exasperated, Johnson hastened on. For

two hours he hurried downhill toward another high range ahead of him. In time he saw the far-away pursuers coming in ones and twos over the mountain at his rear, but they were slow in seeing him. He kept hidden in ravines, though he was always compelled eventually to come up over the shoulder of some knoll.

His pursuers sighted him finally and came on swiftly.

He knew they were as desperate as himself. They dared not let him reach the lowlands. He had stolen the secret of their hidden cattle-trail. Though they killed their horses, they must catch him!

He plunged onward, regardless of his pony's weariness. The race had become cruel, relentless, murderous to the last hoof-beat and the last tottering step.

Darkness came, but nobody could travel far in this brush, and his pursuers would doubtless scatter out in case he turned toward the flank, or doubled on his tracks.

Their scattering helped him. He kept going, straight southwest. For a time he slept, but at dawn he was in the saddle again, weak from hunger, cursing his careless haste in neglecting his lunch-sack when he lost his own horse. And this new mount was not so good as his former one.

He looked back, seeing nothing in the gray haze. He looked forward. Nothing. Then the sun arose, redly. The haze began to melt away. Before him spread miles of brushy hills and cañons descending toward a distant yellow land fading away to a blue blur.

He was gazing down upon the Malapah country at last. Only thirty miles to go! He had crossed the summit!

A mile at his left, a man came galloping over a hillock, unslinging a rifle from his shoulder. The startled Johnson, outflanked by a faster rider, did some of the quickest thinking in his life.

He turned to the right, racing along a hilltop and down its side, as if fleeing. But once in the chaparral of the gulch, he doubled back, dismounted and circled around the hill with his six-shooter ready.

The rider came clattering into the gulch, looking straight toward the hill where his quarry had fled.

"Up!" yelled Johnson, as the fellow rushed across his path, on a fine big bay.

THE man ducked forward, whirled around in the saddle, let go with his rifle from the hip, and went right on.

Savage with disappointment, swearing with wrath, Johnson emptied his six-shooter so quickly that the five shots sounded almost like one, spewing bullets at man and horse.

The bay turned a somersault. The man went over its head. He rolled, kicked at the air, writhed, jumped up, and yanked out his pistol.

Johnson ran like a deer, despite his injured leg and his high-heeled boots, while bullets whipped into the brush around him. He raced to his animal, mounted, and urged it onward, losing his enemy in the brush. Then he reloaded his pistol.

"Hell!" he panted breathlessly, "I wanted that horse!"

His own mount was faltering, yet he forced it onward. For a time he hoped he had evaded most of his pursuers, but toward noon, looking backward, uphill, the flashing sunlight upon rifle-barrels betrayed the positions of distant horsemen spread out in a great circle behind him and almost parallel to his course.

He swore and then he caught his breath with surprise.

"My gosh!" he exclaimed. "I must be brainier than I thought I was; I've drawn the whole gang away from the surveyors!"

IT was exactly two in the morning when a famished, tottering Johnson limped out of the bare foothills and across a sloping field toward a light which beamed invitingly from within a grove of trees. His horse was back in the hills, played out. His injured thigh burned like a hot iron. He was desperately hungry.

His blurred eyes looked longingly toward the light but he hesitated when a hundred yards away.

Horses champed bits among the trees. Men's voices argued in the building. A glimpse through an open side-window revealed that this was a tough roadhouse, with beer, tobacco and provisions stacked on dirty shelves. A whiskered old man with a stained white apron was behind a counter.

Hawk-eyes stood drinking in front of him.

"I tell you, we can't find the fella!" raged an exasperated voice. "Hell, don't you think we tried?"

"We've got to find him!" snarled Hawk-eyes, vindictively.

"Well, where?"

"Watch the roads! God, this is our last chance!"

Red Johnson loomed in the doorway,



Johnson dived over the window-sill, taking splinters of glass with him.

leveling his six-shooter at five armed men. Hunger had driven him to the verge of madness.

"Up!" he croaked.

Six bodies—including the storekeeper—stiffened. Six pairs of hands hesitated.

A black-mustached man down the line reached like lightning for his gun. Johnson saw it. The cannon-flash of his six-shooter blew a hole through the man's forehead, knocking him backward against the counter, pitching him to the floor. A pall of smoke clung over him.

"Hell!" gasped Hawk-eyes.

Johnson pulled the muzzle of his six-shooter toward the crowd. Five pairs of hands went upward.

"Turn around!" panted Johnson.

SLOWLY, unwillingly, they turned. He yanked six-shooters out of holsters, tossing the guns over the counter. Hawk-eyes was last. His face was diabolical, black with thwarted rage. His voice raved:

"You spy—you sneak—you snoop—God, lemme get my hands on yuh! You low-down detective, I'll run you down tonight if—"

Johnson slapped him across the mouth with the gun-muzzle. It was not heroic, but the red-head's temper was on edge. The bandit gave a howl of pain.

"Into that corner!" commanded Johnson.

They obeyed. He scooped up crackers with his left hand, wolfing them down for several minutes.

Hoofs thudded on the ground outside. Spurs jingled among the trees as several riders approached.

"Inside!" shouted Hawk-eyes, daringly. "Inside! Help! Quick!"

Johnson did not fire. It would only cause more trouble. His left hand grabbed crackers. He vaulted over the counter, jumped to the open side-window, and leaped out of it, racing toward the dark forms of horses among the trees.

Boots clattered and thumped inside the house. Rampant voices babbled exclamations and orders. Men vaulted the counter. The riders, outside, jumped off their animals to see what it was all about.

Johnson found a horse. He tossed reins over its ears, leaping into the saddle.

Some one fired at him. Another shot flared among the trees. Another from the window. The bullets were wild, so was the confusion. It helped him. Bending low, he raced his animal out from the grove, along a road which seemed to run northward.

"Get him!" screamed Hawk-eyes. "Get him!"

Shots flared like impassioned pinwheels from the door and window. Riders mounted plunging horses. A cavalcade gathered and began to gain coherence in the pursuit. Yelling, "sending forks of flame which

stabbed at him in the darkness, they thundered along behind him.

Had he luckily grabbed the fastest horse in the outfit? He doubted it. The odds were against it. Therefore he was doomed. He was at the end of his strength, anyhow. His body was numb. His wits were faltering. Yet, with a last rally of intelligence, he discerned thick brush blackly at his right and left.

Without hesitation, without caring, he hurled himself from his saddle, diving into bushes which tore at his face and hands but swayed protectively over him while his horse rushed onward.

The roaring, raging, shooting mob clattered past in quick pursuit. They would have heard Johnson's crash into the brush except for their own noise, which frightened his fleeing pony into greater speed.

Dazedly, eating the last crumbs of cracker, he swayed to his feet and staggered across the road and into a field, westward.

HE came upon a horse in the field some time later. Half asleep, he climbed on its back. It carried him for several miles, unguided. At dawn he slid off his mount, alongside a barn and a corral. He took his bearings and then lurched toward a large screen porch at the rear of a big white two-story building.

A slim young girl in gray calico opened a screen door, staring down at him from above four steps. Her face was freckled, her hair as flaming as his own.

"Hello, kiddo!" he croaked, with a horrible grin.

Her blue eyes regarded him coldly.

"Beat it!" she snapped. "We've got no time for bums!"

The piteous consternation on his haggard visage caused her to draw a sharp breath. Suddenly she noticed the blood around the boot-top of his right leg.

"Oh!" she cried, with quick sympathy. "You poor boy—I didn't know!"

"Whose place is this?" he demanded.

"The Wright ranch."

He remembered the name. Charley Wright! The enemy of the cattle-rustlers!

"Hurrah!" he yelled. Then: "Who are you?"

"Me? I'm the hired help."

"Where's Wright?"

"I don't know. Inside, maybe."

He shouldered past her, lurching into the kitchen and then forward past a dining-room, to a big front room where a gray-

eyed man with a blond mustache and a pompadour sat at a roll-top desk.

"Hey!" yelled Johnson. "Get your riders together for a trip to the hills!"

The rancher whirled around.

"Get out of here!" he roared. "Git! What the hell do you mean, comin' here like this? Go sober up!"

"Aw, go soak your head!" shouted Johnson. "I tell you, there's a party of Southwestern Railroad surveyors bein' shot up by rustlers, up over the ridge!"

"What?"

"Yeh. They stumbled onto the rustlers' hidden trail. The rustlers didn't like it. They've got the surveyors surrounded!"

The rancher jumped up, drawing a quick breath.

"The hidden trail! We've been tryin' to find it for years! Where is it?"

"Northeast. Over the ridge. Into the next county, toward the Navajo Line railroad. I've been there. They chased me, clean into the Malapah!"

The ranchman's fists clenched, but strangely he hesitated.

"Get your men together!" yelled Johnson, frantically. "Hit for the hills! Slam into that gang while you've got the chance!"

The ranchman still hesitated, grasping the back of his chair. His eyes were perplexed.

"What's the matter?" snarled Johnson. "Do you doubt me?"

Wright sat down, shaking his head.

"No. But I'm thinkin'. Maybe I oughtn't to risk it now."

"Why?"

"Conditions have sorter changed. Two weeks ago, I'd have gone rampin' into that country, no matter what it cost; but now it's none of my business. A big land syndicate has taken an option on this ranch, so you see I don't care much about rustlers now. I've practically sold out!"

DISMAYED by this maddening setback, Johnson swore and raved till his host caught some of his urgency, telephoning to the sheriff, to the far-away Southwestern railroad, and to nearer ranchers who were strangely apathetic. They, too, were under option to sell to the land syndicate.

Johnson nearly wept. Time was passing!

"Well, some of the boys may be willin' to take a chance," consoled Wright. "I'll put it up to 'em. You go and sleep for a while."

From sheer weariness, Johnson had to accede, but at noon worry for his friends caused him to jump out of bed again.

Horses galloped outside. Men talked loudly. He looked out of the window. Eight armed riders were sitting around on the porch. Their saddled animals stood at a long hitching-post in front of the gate. Two pack-mules were being loaded. Wright was superintending it.

Wright had collected some daring volunteers! They were waiting for Red Johnson! With a glad little yelp, he bathed his face and then dashed outside to take command.

to take it out on the surveyors. I'm afraid of it. Let's start!"

The cow-punchers mounted, moving out into the road. A carrot-haired girl appeared at the rear of the house.

"So long, Red!" shouted Johnson.

"Good luck, Red!" she called.

The cavalcade galloped across the valley to the road-house. Nobody was there but a scared storekeeper. The others had

Johnson thrust at those malignant hands—he never thought to stab the man's body, only those fingers which were choking out his life.

"The sheriff'll get here tonight with a big posse," informed the ranchman. "Everything's fixed!"

"Fine!" gloated Johnson.

"The Southwestern's collectin' special agents to follow the sheriff," added Wright. "The railroad's gone wild. The news is all over the State. They've even got Chicago excited. Chicago's offerin' rewards. Dead or alive!"

"My gosh!" yelped Johnson. Then he chuckled. "Huh! And those crazy galoots was aimin' to keep their cañon a *secret*!"

"Yeh," agreed Wright. "But will you find any of 'em now?"

Johnson sobered.

"Yes," he decided. "They'll want to move their stuff. Then mebbe they'll try

hastened back into the hills. So did Johnson. His posse rushed onward till dark.

At dawn they resumed their journey. By noon they came into the higher hills. Ahead of them loomed ridge on ridge, leading up toward the summit, yet no scouts appeared to harass the party. Fearing a trap, Johnson spread his men out.

They plunged through a tangled wilderness, passing over knoll after knoll. Johnson led the way to a higher hill which overlooked a vast territory.

Five miles ahead, to the left, shots flashed on the top of a round hill. Smoke drifted through gray-green brush. Men and horses moved at the base of the hillock. Others were near the top. Still others were on another hill. A square mile of battle!



"It's the surveyors!" cried Johnson. "It must be! Yeh; they've had time to bring their traverse over the ridge by now! Swing to the left! Keep down in the cañons! Hurry! We may be too late!"

They raced along brushy gullies. Faint popping sounds began to come to their ears at last.

They came to a knoll where they had to go over the top. Riflemen were on a higher hill just in front, firing from concealment at another hill beyond them.

Johnson and his men, unobserved by the busy enemy, unslung their own rifles. They rushed down into a broad ravine. With guns flaming, they raced up to the top of the hill, in the rear of the astonished gunners who ran howling down the hillside, trying to escape the drumming hoofs and spitting carbines. One man pitched head-first. Another arose but fell backward. Two others escaped, firing madly at the riders. Johnson drew his six-shooter, sending three shots after them.

A little cheer came from the knoll just ahead. Johnson glanced there.

A plane-table stood, grotesquely lopsided, at the crest of the hill. A tent had fallen over upon a bush. Two dead mules lay on the ground. A horse tossed and rolled alongside them. A human figure was lifeless on a rock. Men in khaki, half-concealed in brush and rocks, called weakly at Johnson.

A bullet sang down toward him from the east. Another passed from the west. Exasperated rustlers turned the muzzles of their blazing rifles toward the man who had come toward them again.

"Duck!" yelled a man alongside Johnson, starting his horse.

He whirled his animal away. *Thump!* A bullet struck it. It went farther around, collapsing on its side. He sprang clear. Another bullet numbed a finger of his left hand as he ran, crouching, down the side of the hill.

His horsemen waited in the gulch below.

"Get to the surveyors!" cried one of them.

"No!" yelled Johnson. "Ride around 'em. To the left! In a circle! Jump them rustlers one by one, before they can outnumber us!"

The riders galloped away willingly. Johnson, six-shooter in hand, walked toward the hill where his friends were besieged.

A horse clattered into the gulch, at his

right. He swung around, looking straight into the ferocious brown-black eyes of the leader of the rustlers.

RECOGNITION was mutual. Action was swift. Their six-shooters exploded almost together, and again, blowing thunderous blasts of fire and lead toward each other. Johnson's hat flew off. Hawk-eyes' horse faltered and stumbled in the smoke.

Hawk-eyes jumped out of the saddle, sending a shot past its neck toward the dodging Johnson, whose pistol-hammer clicked three times. The rustler's six-shooter also clicked as he pulled the trigger frantically.

They glared like baffled maniacs. Wildly they ran together, whipping at each other with the muzzles of their six-shooters, warded off by alert elbows. Suddenly the rustler dropped his gun. He twined his strong, bony fingers around Johnson's throat. Johnson struck madly at his face. Again. Again. They rolled to the ground, panting and snarling. Johnson tried to smash that receding jaw, but he could get no leverage for a full swing.

The hands pressed on his windpipe relentlessly. He felt himself growing weak. He saw black. He had only a few moments of consciousness before he would be strangled. He dropped his useless gun.

In that moment of mad desperation he remembered a jack-knife in his pocket. His right hand flew to it. He drew it out, writhing so that his left hand could help open it. The triumphant rustler, grinning with malice, failed to see it as he tightened his hold on Johnson's throat.

Johnson thrust at those malignant hands. He never thought to stab the man's body. He could only think of crushing fingers which were choking out his life, making his eyes bulge from their sockets. He slashed with all his strength. He slashed again, more weakly.

The fingers relaxed all at once. Pure air rushed to Johnson's starving lungs. For a time he laid on his back, panting. Then he looked up.

A little octagonal rifle-barrel was pointing straight at the rustler's curved nose.

Behind the gun stood Channing, the gaunt assistant chief of the survey party, looking as if he had come off a butcher-block—blood was on his cheeks, his neck, and over his khaki jacket and trousers.

The rustler came slowly on his elbows, staring at the rifle.

"A twenty-two!" he screeched. "Hell! For squirrels and jackrabbits!"

"It's all I have," retorted Channing grimly. "Sorry! Wish I'd had a machine-gun!"

Johnson began to laugh hysterically. Reaction had set in. He laughed when he recovered his six-shooter and loaded it. He was still laughing as he herded the captive up the hill toward the little camp; but there he sobered.

Martin Short, the packer, lay stiffly on his face. Krackenburger, the cook, writhed behind a rock. His left leg was shattered. Gonzales, Dayton and Lawton were entrenched around the rims of the hill. Dayton's bloody head was bound with a handkerchief. In a little cluster of rocks, the spectacled Chief was bending over Tom Ferris, who was sobbing with a bullet through his right lung. Other bullets were humming into the camp occasionally, though shots and yells from afar told that the rustlers were otherwise occupied.

Johnson feared his men might be outnumbered, in spite of their circling tactics. Frowning, he looked southwest. Far away, over hills and valleys, he saw riders coming through the brush, spreading away to the distant horizon. The vanguard of the sheriff's posse was approaching!

Johnson, satisfied, gazed at the little Chief, who noticed him at last. The Chief came upright. He was haggard and dirty. In his blue eyes was despair, but he greeted Johnson with a glad cry, wringing his hand fervently.

"God bless you, you came in time!"

"Yeh," agreed Johnson; "but what happened?"

The Chief shook his tousled head.

"I don't know. I can't understand it. They let us alone after you left us; we brought our traverse over the ridge; and then suddenly, without warning, these incredible rogues—these maniac murderers—rushed right through our camp, stampeding the mules and wrecking the tent while shooting right and left."

"Didn't you try to stop 'em?"

"Of course we rallied, but it was too late. We are not well armed. One sporting rifle, one twenty-two, and two pistols!"

"Tough!" said Johnson, helplessly.

Young Ferris moaned.

The Chief, clenching anguished fists, looked down upon the handsome youth. Tears shone unashamed in the Chief's eyes. Quivering, shaking, he bent down toward

the sufferer, stroking the blond hair as he cried aloud in agony:

"My boy—my boy! God forgive me, I shouldn't have let you come into this—neither you nor the others! I should have finished this job alone!"

THE sheriff's big posse came up at last, chasing and capturing rustlers, though a few got away. The house in the hidden cañon was burned down. A victorious procession returned at last to the Wright ranch with prisoners, cattle, loot and wounded men.

Johnson and the battered survey-crew carried Tom Ferris in a litter hung on poles between two mules walking in tandem. Ferris was placed in a comfortable bed where he began a long battle for recovery.

The ranch-house became the center of a teeming population. Neighbors, surveyors, doctors, railroad men, deputy sheriffs, and even reporters, thronged the building and the road while Red Johnson basked in their admiration.

"My, aint you the hero, though!" bantered the red-haired girl, in front of the screen-porch, before supper. "Too bad you're so homely!"

"Yeh; I'm a hero," he drawled. "There's money in it, too. Rewards and everything. I'm thinkin' of settlin' down in this valley. I'm sorry there aint some high-toned girl around here. I'd admire to meet one!"

Her teeth clicked together. "M'f! No girl with any sense would look at you!"

"Well, you must be dumb, then, because you're glarin' straight at me."

She threw a pan of water at him. He ran out, slamming the door, chuckling to himself.

But next morning the Chief was ordered to take his whole survey-crew, including Johnson, to the railroad. They arrived before sunset at a tank-station with a siding.

A big private car stood on the siding. Railroad officials thronged into it. Minor employes and sheriffs occupied the long station-platform, where a special telegraph-set was erected. Newspaper men hung around the car. Some were inside.

The little Chief frowned at all this. He was still suffering from depression and self-reproach. He seemed worried as he and the cowpuncher entered the elegant car while others made way for them.

An office-compartment, gleaming with mahogany, was occupied by an austere gentleman with a white mustache, and a

thin, bald-headed man who appeared gloomy. The Chief hesitated at sight of him. This was Hill, his boss, the Southwestern's division engineer. The dignified gentleman in black was the vice-president and general manager of the railroad. He nodded to the Chief.

"You are Mr. Edward Keeler, head of that survey party in the hills?"

"Yes sir."

"Who ordered you to make a survey of the Malapah basin?"

The Chief glanced at his bald-headed boss. "Why, Mr. Hill, sir."

"Did he tell you there was a private land-promotion scheme behind it?"

"No sir. Certainly not."

"Did he say the survey was being made for the Southwestern Railroad?"

The little Chief frowned. "Why, no," he admitted. "Nothing of that sort was mentioned. I was merely ordered to go. I went."

"But you believed it was being made for the Southwestern?"

"Naturally. I'm an employee."

THE general manager turned toward Hill. The old gentleman's expression was frigid and his jaw was like a steel trap.

"I think I understand now," he said, with a grim nod. "You and your friends—this private syndicate of yours—took options on the lands in the Malapah. Then you sent a Southwestern survey crew into the Malapah to verify a cleverly spread rumor that the Southwestern is going into the valley. Naturally that would raise land-values. You could sell out at a profit."

Hill bowed his head.

"In other words," continued the general manager, icily, "you used the Southwestern as a cat's-paw for your private venture. You sent a totally unauthorized survey into the mountains. Probably there are other railroad officials implicated in the plot."

"No!" cried Hill.

"No? Well, we will look into that. There is much to look into. You have been very clever, Mr. Hill; very clever. We might never have heard of the business but for this rumpus in the mountains—but you overplayed your part. Instead of merely spreading a rumor, you became too realistic. You attempted to verify it. You even sent in your party from the north so that the survey would last longer. A clever scheme! And now some of our innocent

employees have paid for it with their lives!"

Hill's face was stark white. His hands trembled. Suddenly he arose. "You have my resignation," he whispered.

"Yes. Naturally. However, one of our operatives will stay with you! Good day!"

HILL stalked out of the car. The general manager's blue eyes appraised the astonished little Chief.

"Mr. Keeler," said the autocrat, at last, "you have been with us for twelve years. You have an excellent record, I understand. I believe you can handle Mr. Hill's work. I will so recommend to the Chief Engineer."

"Thank you," gasped the dazed Chief.

The autocrat's gaze fell upon Johnson.

"So this is the man who rescued our employees and tore the whole plot open! Well, Mr. Johnson, our railroad thanks you. We have a good position for you. We need your sort of men!"

Johnson gaped at him. "No, thanks—sir," he managed to say. "I want to live in the Malapah. I sort of like the—scenery."

The general manager smiled. "Well, have it your way. We hope, however, to show you our appreciation, in addition to the extra rewards we have authorized. I would like to take you to Yuma with me. Some of our other officials would like to meet you."

"Yuma!" choked Johnson. "Gosh, no!"

"Why not?"

Johnson explained hesitantly toward his boot-toes. "Why—you see, sir, I sort of left Yuma in a hurry."

"Yes? Why?"

"Well, there were some people after me."

"Oh! Was that why you decided to join the survey party in the mountains?"

"Yes sir. I—sort of—wanted to go where it was quiet."

"Well, what were the Yuma people after you for?"

Johnson faltered. "Well, you see, I've sort o' changed," he stated with apparent irrelevance. "I'm tryin' to live respectable now—"

"Yes; but what did the Yuma people want you for?"

Johnson shook his head.

"Come, Red!" urged the other. "What was it?"

Johnson's reply came grudgingly:

"Cattle-rustlin'."

THE END.

REAL EXPERIENCES



An officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted here narrates his most exciting experience.

A Yukon Hold-up

By Sergeant Pat Egan

ONE night in the late fall of 1901, masked men held up the Dominion Saloon in Dawson City. One of the bandits adjured those present to, "Keep those hands up or we will make this a slaughter-house!" His advice being well taken, he and his two companions departed with about thirty-six hundred dollars in specie, nuggets and bills.

Three arrests were made soon after the affair, and the suspects were believed to be associated with Soapy Smith's notorious gang—their names were Tomlinson, Whitey Moore, and Brophy. They were held on a vagrancy charge. Brophy, by legal assistance, was able to secure a dismissal, but the others were detained.

At this time I had not been very long in Dawson, having been transferred from Hootalinqua a couple of months before. I was an ordinary constable with three years' service, most of which had been in the Boer War contingent. Due to an odd incident of circumstance, however, this hold-up, which was primarily an affair for the town patrol and detective department of the force, was destined to afford me an opportunity for

securing promotion and considerable commendation.

SHORTLY after I had arrived in Dawson, the troop orderly strolled through the barrack-room one day and inquired if anyone had a suit of civilian clothes. Such a suit—apart from its value being about one hundred dollars—was rather unlikely, because of its extra weight, to be found in a Mountie's equipment. However, I happened to have one, and I offered to lend it. "Don't want to borrow it!" said the orderly. "Put it on, and report at the town station." He added a fur cap and coon-skin coat to my outfit; and I did as he ordered.

At the town station was an Inland Revenue officer, and with another constable added to the party, we three rushed up the Hunker Trail for five or six miles.

"Now, boys," said the Revenue man, calling a halt, "there's a still in here, and it's run by a big guy—a Swede. Can you fellows fight?"

My companion admitted some wrestling ability, but I kept silent. I measured only

five feet nine inches and was of a slight-built physique. I recollect explaining, years later, to a U. S. A. detective in whose territory I was making an important arrest, that we small fellows did all the work, and that the six-footers were kept for show—which explanation quelled his misgivings as to my being a real Mountie.

"Well, do your best—and look out for yourselves," said the Revenue agent. "I'm going to remain here!"

Not at all encouraged by his remarks and attitude, we left him and plunged into the bush. It was impossible to make a silent approach, and as we came upon the concealed distillery we glimpsed the big Swede running as fast as he could to escape our attentions. It was here that my light weight was going to count, so I took up the chase. After a considerable sprint I overhauled the fugitive and flung myself, gasping and almost breathless, upon him. We collapsed upon the snow crust, and lay there panting and exhausted. Soon my uniformed companion came along, and after a breathing-spell, we returned with the prisoner.

IT was my slight success in this minor affair which brought my name before the notice of Staff Sergeant Smith and won for me some small assignments in the hold-up case, leading, finally, to my being given a most important mission.

Tomlinson, as mentioned before, was one of the bandits who remained in prison. Detective Walsh enlisted the aid of a female friend of the suspect, and managed to secure from him a full confession implicating Whitey Moore and Brophy. The latter had by this time disappeared, however.

Tomlinson led the police to a cache in the basement of the mansion that was in process of construction to house the governor of the Yukon. There lay his share of the booty. Then, following his instructions, I took a squad of men to the hillside near the Slide and we unearthed two revolvers, a rifle, some masks, a poncho and a false "tummy" that Brophy had worn as an additional disguise. These had been discarded in the course of the flight after the robbery.

Brophy was a genial, hail-fellow type of criminal and had a certain popularity, as such men often have—and a few enemies in addition. The news was disseminated from his unknown retreat that he was going about armed, and would shoot to kill if

arrest were attempted. His chances of getting out of the country were almost nil and he was proportionately desperate.

A reward of five hundred dollars was posted for information as to his whereabouts, and as a result of this, certain clues were picked up. A first attempt to benefit by the information secured was not successful, due to some indiscretion on the part of those involved.

One day, Detective Walsh and Staff Sergeant Smith decided to give me the assignment, together with a constable named MacMillan—a cautious and capable man. Shortly thereafter, I sallied forth, wearing a fuzzy hat, and dressed in a miner's outfit, with pack and everything.

My destination was the Stockade roadhouse, reported to be a rendezvous of Brophy—but I had to mush many miles to reach it, for I wished to arrive as if I had come in from the lower river, presumably on my way up the Bonanza to recoup my finances after a disastrous spell at the faro-table.

When I reached Stockade I was very tired. MacMillan, my companion on the assignment, was already on the scene. He had a three-weeks' beard, was smoking a dirty pipe and wearing a red sweater and other "civvies." At first, he took little notice of me, but when I produced a five-dollar piece and ordered drinks, he edged over and began asking me questions about my origin and destination.

My answers seemed satisfactory to the five or six in the group and when, a little later, some one circulated a petition having to do with miners' rights, I remember I signed it, "Pat Murphy."

FAIRLY soon I retired. My fatigue was so evident that MacMillan decided not to disturb me that night; I slept on, unconscious of the fact that Brophy, the object of my search, was a visitor downstairs for a brief spell. But he left without suspecting our presence, and his visit not having been satisfactorily completed—thanks to the efforts of the third party to the deal—it was more than likely that he would have to return on the following evening.

As Mac and I discussed a plan of campaign, Walsh's warning was not forgotten. "Pat," Walsh had said, "if you don't get him, he will get you! He's going to shoot to kill!"

We realized that there would be trouble

if either of us did kill or even severely injure Brophy, unless it was as a last resort and in dire necessity. Even then the reputation of the Mounties would not be enhanced by the killing—and we held the good name of the Force very dear.

THE following night found us hidden in the shadows of an outbuilding some twenty yards from the road-house. We kept our gaze upon the lean-to which formed an entrance-hall or vestibule to the building.

At last, when patience and vitality were both at a low ebb, the figure of Brophy loomed out of the darkness and approached the house. Listening carefully I heard a faint noise and decided it was the thud caused by his having deposited his rifle in the lean-to. Light shone from the interior as he opened the door and passed within.

Suddenly there flashed across my mind a scene from a play that had been presented in Dawson that winter. In it the hero scored effectively by secretly removing the cartridges from his enemy's revolver before the encounter takes place.

"I'm going to get his rifle," I said to MacMillan; and I started across to the lean-to. Stepping as lightly as I could and practically crawling the last few feet, to avoid giving an alarm, I got the gun. My fingers were so numb by this time that I could not risk manipulating the weapon and I returned to Mac with the rifle in my hands. Deftly he emptied it and I returned it quickly to its resting-place.

Just as I retreated from the entrance, a light flashed. Brophy was coming out. As he picked up his rifle I called to him to "Stick them up!" He replied by pointing the rifle directly at my stomach and then, as the muzzle touched me, he pulled the trigger. I had a sensation like that of jumping off into an unknown depth, but the harmless click reassured me and I repeated my demand.

"You've got me, have you?" he shouted,

and ignoring my warning, he raised the rifle with the intention of using it as a club. As he swung it, I fired at his arm. The bullet grazed his side but did no other harm. However, the shock caused him to pause for a second, and in that second MacMillan closed in upon him. A struggle ensued in the narrow entry and Brophy seemed, in the light from the opened doorway, to be endeavoring to reach his collar.

"Grab his hands, Mac!" I shouted and soon we had his wrists handcuffed behind his back. Then, examining his neckcloth, I took out a razor—opened back and prepared for aggressive use in the manner followed by negro thugs down South.

For a few moments we had difficulty in convincing the spectators that we were without evil intentions toward them, but that was soon cleared up, and a telephone message brought the patrol-cutter from Dawson to convey the prisoner back to the jail.

For my part in the arrest I got a promotion, a monetary reward of fifty dollars and a week's leave; but more important than these was the fact that I came under the attention of my superiors as being likely material for the detective department of the Service.

BROPHY received a life-sentence, but was released some years ago from New Westminster penitentiary. Whitey Moore got ten years and Tomlinson, the informer, was permitted to leave the territory.

Six months later, Staff Sergeant Smith called me in and read an item from a Frisco newspaper in which a gambling-joint hold-up was reported and one of the bandits was said to have used the words, "Keep still or I'll make this place like a slaughter-house!"

We advised the Frisco police of our experience with a man who used a similar phrase and as a result of our description they picked up Tomlinson. This time he received a sentence to the penitentiary.

Forbes Parkhill

The gifted author of those well-liked novelettes "Nobody's Yes Man" and "The Fighting Fool" will contribute to our next issue a fascinating novelette of airplane adventure in the Far North under the title—

"The Empire of the Arctic"



By
Captain
Roland Burgess

*The vivid story
of a protracted
and desperate
struggle against
the savage sea.*

Shipwrecked

DURING the Great War I was master of the four-masted schooner *Gypsum Empress*, carrying cargoes between southern United States ports and England, Scotland and Italy. After several voyages, during which we were chased by submarines but escaped by the timely appearance of British patrol-boats, we loaded a cargo of rosin in the hold, and lumber on deck, at Pensacola, Florida, and sailed for Genoa, Italy, on the twenty-fourth of April, 1917.

All went well until the night of May 12th, when during a southwest gale we struck submerged wreckage of some kind, which caused the ship to leak badly. All hands were called on deck to man the hand-pumps and get the steam-pumps started, and we continued to run before the gale. At daylight half of the crew were detailed to throw the deckload overboard in an endeavor to lighten the ship and thereby decrease the pressure and leaking, as the water was gaining on us in spite of our efforts. By dark the greater part of the deckload had been thrown or washed overboard and the ship was lightened somewhat.

The gale continued throughout the night with seas breaking over the ship and at times washing men away from the pumps.

At about four A. M. a very heavy sea struck the ship and smashed in the starboard side of the forward deckhouse, and put the fire out in the engine-room. We lost two hours in getting steam up, and during that time the water gained over two feet on us. During the afternoon the wind

and sea moderated somewhat and we gained a foot on the water by dark; but during the night the gale again increased to its former severity. As day was breaking a heavy sea again put the engine fire out, and by the time we got it going once more, the water had gained over two feet on us.

The ship now had ten feet of water in the hold, and we only had two cold lunches for our food that day.

THE gale continued until the afternoon of the 16th, when it began to moderate. There was now fourteen feet of water in the hold; it was only two feet short of being full, and was getting a bad list to starboard, so we decided to "Abandon ship" before darkness came on—for we were very doubtful if the ship would remain afloat when full of water and rosin.

Half of the crew were detailed to get the boat ready and to put provisions and water in her when she was put alongside. The lowering of the boat and getting it alongside was a very difficult job as there was great risk of its being smashed under the stern, but it was done in good shape considering the very heavy sea which was running.

The men who had been left at the pumps were now called away to "Abandon ship"—and none too soon, for the ship was listing over and the lee rail was going under water. I was the last one to leave the ship; I only had to step from the quarter taff-rail onto the boat, so deep was the ship. We shoved clear and lay about two hun-

dred feet distant from the ship—just far enough so the masts would not roll down on our boat in case the ship should roll over.

We had all been laboring hard, had been knocked about by the seas for four days, with no warm food and no sleep and we thought we were about played out—but the worst was yet to come. We divided the crew in watches, four men in each watch—one to steer, one to bail water out and two to row. I took charge of first watch until midnight, then the mate until four A. M. and so on.

We had to keep as near to the ship as the masts would allow on account of the bad sea still running. The hull was almost all under water and had listed over so the masts almost touched the water. We were nearly swamped several times that night, but daylight came at last and with it an improvement in the weather. We then sewed some new canvas together the shape of the forward end of the boat and battened it securely outside the gunwales, put a long oar under it and shored it up with cross-sticks which were put in the boat for that purpose. This made the spray run off that half and no doubt was the means of the saving of four of us later on. The weather became fairly good and we lay near the ship. As she did not sink, but lay very deep with part of one side showing and masts nearly level with the water until the evening of the 19th, and we had sighted nothing, we decided to sail to the north in hope of getting in track of steamers.

WE sailed to the north until daylight, then the wind coming on to blow hard we steered northeast before it until about nine o'clock, and were getting a drag ready to heave to, when a big wave struck the boat and pitch-poled her, that is, it threw the stern over the bow and landed upside down, and we all went overboard right lively.

I do not know how far the wave carried us, but when I swam to the surface I was about a hundred feet from the boat, and was about drowned, but I got back to the boat somehow and got on the bottom; then the second mate and two sailors arrived next, and we lay across the boat trying to get our breath with seas washing over us. We did not see any of the other four men and thought they were under the boat, so as soon as we got breath enough to work, we turned the boat over to get them out. By

standing on one side to get her started and then on the keel as she came over, we followed as she rolled upright, and jumped in. Just then another wave struck us and rolled the boat over again upside down—with the four of us under her this time!

ANOTHER man and myself managed to get from under and on the bottom, but the other two we never saw again. Two men who were under the boat the first time she capsized turned up now and we helped them up beside us—the others were lost. Half of the crew were gone; four of us were left on the bottom of the boat gasping for breath with the waves washing over us. One of the men said we had better get over and finish it up as we would only perish of thirst even if we could manage to hold to the boat. I said it was a blue outlook and we were a long way from home, on the bottom of a boat in the North Atlantic in a gale, but I was going to hang on to the boat as long as I was able and they'd better all do the same, as we might be able to get the boat over and something might come along and pick us up. Although I had small hopes of this, it was as good as anything to say.

We were about ready to try and turn the boat over again when a wave larger than usual broke over us and swept us all off again. When I came to the surface I was again about a hundred feet from the boat, and could see the others about the same distance from it.

Though we were scattered at quite a distance, we all got back on the bottom again more dead than alive, then lay over the keel to let the salt-water out of our mouths. Gasping for breath, and unable to speak, with the waves washing over us continually, we would hang on to the keel for awhile—but before we could get strength and breath enough to turn the boat over, another wave would hit us, and we would have the whole thing to do over again. Before this we had shed nearly all of our clothes so that we could swim and work better.

Several times we were washed away, but at last we got the boat turned upright again and got into it; as she was full of water we had to balance it to keep from upsetting again until we got the water out; we first put mast and sail over for a drag to keep the boat's head to the seas. The canvas over the forward half still held a barrel of water (five gallons), a can of gasoline, and a can of motor-oil. We

Shipwrecked

poured about half the oil and gasoline on the water and made a smooth spot around the boat; it was hard to lighten the boat at first, but as the oil spread the water did not come over much and we soon got all the water out. We then found a small can of peas and a can of milk which the canvas half-cover had retained while the boat was upside down.

The second day after we were capsized a steamer passed us about half a mile distant, but they did not see us, as we were in the hollows between the waves most of the time. We could only see the steamer when on top of a wave—about three seconds out of fifteen—the steamer was in sight all day, but was not making much headway bucking the wind and heavy seas. We shook our fists at them for not keeping a better lookout.

There was no chance of being picked up at night, no way to make a light—for everything had been washed out of the boat—nothing to eat, and we only allowed ourselves about half a cup of water three times a day. We dared not touch the water at night for fear of losing some of it in getting it out of the keg; it was salty, but we would not have lasted long without it.

DURING the next week we saw two steamers pass us on different days, but they did not see us. We shook our fists at them also, and one man said, "Look at all that good food going away, and we cannot get any of it!"

It was on the morning of the 31st of May that the ship *Moreni* sighted us and at first thought we were a submarine—and was about ready to fire at us, when the captain saw it was a boat, and came over and picked us up. We were hardly able to walk and they had to feed us very little at first as we were nearly dead from starvation and exposure, and had been bruised, cut and skinned by the knocking about. We had not been dry or warm for the entire fifteen days in the boat.

Since we had struck the wreckage it had been such a miserable eighteen days of hardship, suffering, starvation and struggle, that it seems impossible any man could have survived it. We were more like scarecrows than men—we had each lost about fifty pounds in weight during that time.

A few days later we were landed safely at Gibraltar; three days after that the *Moreni* was sunk by gunfire from a submarine in the Mediterranean Sea.

Saved by a Voice

TWO years ago I was look-out man in the Government forestry service on the Spokane Indian Reservation. The whole Reservation was my territory. It is not a very large place; but on the east end there is quite an area of yellow pine timber, some of the finest in the Northwest.

The entire unit of timber had recently been contracted for sale to a lumber company. We had to protect that forest from fire, and believe me, we watched it!

My lookout station was on the highest point on the reservation, and from there I could hardly fail to pick up a smoke for miles around.

It was the last week in July—hot, with dry, hard winds and low humidity. A single spark in those woods would nearly make the country explode, and within a few hours there would be losses of thousands of dollars.

I was talking on the telephone to the chief forester. "And be sure to watch that Chimokane unit," he ended up.

"All right," I promised. "I'll see a fire the minute it starts."

I went out of the little ten-by-twelve cabin and climbed into the tower. I was young—only twenty—and I took a certain pride in the fact that I usually located a fire about as soon as the smoke was visible.

Suddenly there was the sound of horses' hoofs down along the rocky trail.

Then two riders appeared on the point of the hill about two hundred yards away. I knew nearly everyone in the country, but it seemed that I couldn't recognize these fellows. I trained my binoculars on them as they came nearer. They both had characteristics that caused me to conclude that they were Indians, not full bloods, though, probably half-breeds. I also recognized the fact that they didn't belong to the Spokane tribe.



A forest ranger is held up while a fire is started—and the subsequent events are interesting indeed.

By
**William A.
Galbraith**

They rode on up as if they knew where they were going. I climbed down.

"Hello, fellows," I greeted.

"Yessir," one replied.

The other, with his hat pulled low over his eyes, grunted "Uh!"

"Get off, and rest awhile," I suggested.

"We're not needin' to be asked," the big fellow replied.

"Hard-boiled devils," I thought. "Something queer here."

I noticed that the fellow who had spoken had a six-shooter on his hip. Things appeared to me to be looking rather bad.

They started talking Indian, and pointing toward the east. For a little while they conversed in serious tones, but they didn't speak a word of English—just looked me up and down with a sort of contemptuous grin on their faces, as they mumbled along in Indian.

Try as I might to bring about a little conversation with these hard eggs I couldn't seem to make them register. They took to walking around—sort of looking things over. I went into the cabin for awhile.

Again I went outside, and stopped dead still when I looked toward the east. There was a long, slender film of blue smoke lazily lifting above the trees, on the south side of the Chimokane unit. It had started! The spark was set! When the wind hit that, the devil himself couldn't stop it.

I scrambled up the ladder, whirled the sights of the fire-finder around, and in two minutes had the smoke located: Section 8,

township 29, range 38. I nearly fell back down the ladder.

As I leaped through the door, I bumped into the big fellow. Quickly I grabbed the ringing-crank on the telephone.

"Stop!" he shouted.

And what I mean, I stopped! That voice would stop a charging bull.

"What y' gonna do?" he growled.

"Report that fire," I snapped back.

"Like hell y' are!"

So that was the game! I had rather anticipated it once or twice. Nearly every year since the contract for the timber sale had been signed, some unknown scoundrel had made vigorous attempts to destroy the timber by fire. No one lived near the locality. There was only a chance in a hundred that anyone outside of the lookout could see the fire before it had burned over half a section. If anyone were determined to see the woods burn it was, after all, a simple matter to prevent the look-out man from reporting the smoke.

I looked over at the opposite wall. My .30-.30 rifle hung not ten feet from me. I thought for only a small part of a second, then leaped for the rifle.

Something that felt like the blow from a sledge-hammer collided with my jaw, and I mutely tumbled into a corner.

WHEN I looked at the fire again it was spreading wildly, and throwing up clouds of black smoke. Then half a mile north of it another smoke started. The

same old trick. Two years before, they had started seven in a row, but that time I had reported them as fast as they started.

But now! What could a fellow do? Maybe these "tough nuts" were bluffing! I sprang to the phone and rang one long.

There was a familiar metallic click behind me. For a moment my eyes couldn't get past the barrel of that revolver.

"You wouldn't shoot a fellow?" I gasped.

"Who'd know about it?" he sneered back. He was right—who *would* know?

My hand was still on the little crank. One short ring now, and the chief forester would answer. My fingers played with the crank. The gun leveled at my head.

The instinct of self-preservation knocked my sense of duty clear off the map. I stepped away from the phone.

A few minutes later I looked through a crack in the cabin wall. A third fire was starting north of the other two. I realized that it was time to do some thinking. I could go outside, just to look around, then run over the hill. I could hurry to my camp at the foot of the mountain, get in my car, and be at the agency in an hour.

I started for the door. The fellow with the gun blocked my way. He seemed to anticipate my intentions.

Well, I was stuck. And if anyone happens to want to know, I was scared!

I lay down on a blanket on the floor, face down, and did a lot of thinking. If I could just make them believe that I was asleep! I lay still, and in a few minutes started a heavy, regular breathing.

AFTER about ten minutes they spoke a few words in Indian. Then the little fellow said: "Shoot him behind the ear."

I didn't move. I tell you, I was too scared to move. They merely laughed, and then I heard them go to the corner where there was a little cupboard in which I kept my food. I knew then why they had threatened to shoot me. They figured if I had been awake I would have jumped up. I was glad then that I had been so fearful.

I heard them fooling with dishes. Then I turned my head to see what was taking place. The smaller man was digging into a can of jam, and the other was making an attempt to wrest it from him—and his gun was back in its holster.

There was my chance; and I knew it. I got the gun. An arm flew out. I ducked it, and staggered back against the opposite wall.

The little fellow grabbed my rifle. Now there must have been something wrong with that six-shooter, or else I was awfully nervous. I aimed for his arm. But the bullet struck the breech of my rifle, and put it out of business.

Another sledge-hammer slugged my jaw. I dropped the gun, and the little man went on his knees to get it. I had fallen toward it. I beat him just a little. I had it by the barrel, and with all the strength I had left I drove the butt against his head.

"Wham!" came another blow behind my ear, and I knew I was done for.

MAYBE you don't think there is such a thing as a saving coincidence in actual life. Well, there was little maybe about it in my mind before this incident. I had been in a few tight places before, and I have since—and I have had to suffer the consequences in their natural order. But at this particular time, when the next moment would have been fatal for me, something happened.

On the wall by the telephone I had what is called a "howler." It is something like a loud speaker. Over it I could hear all the talk that went over the line. But sometimes there would be hours at a time when no one used the line at all. It had been that way this afternoon.

The chief ranger at the agency usually didn't ring for me, but just took down his receiver and yelled: "Hello, Bill," or some such thing.

I struggled to get to my feet. My opponent grabbed the gun. Just then—

"Hello, Bill! Hey, Bill!" came over the howler.

And the fellow who might have sent me into eternity leaped through the door and was gone!

When I was able to I roped and wired the fellow I had hit with the gun until I could hardly see him. The only reason why I didn't chain him was because I didn't have any chain.

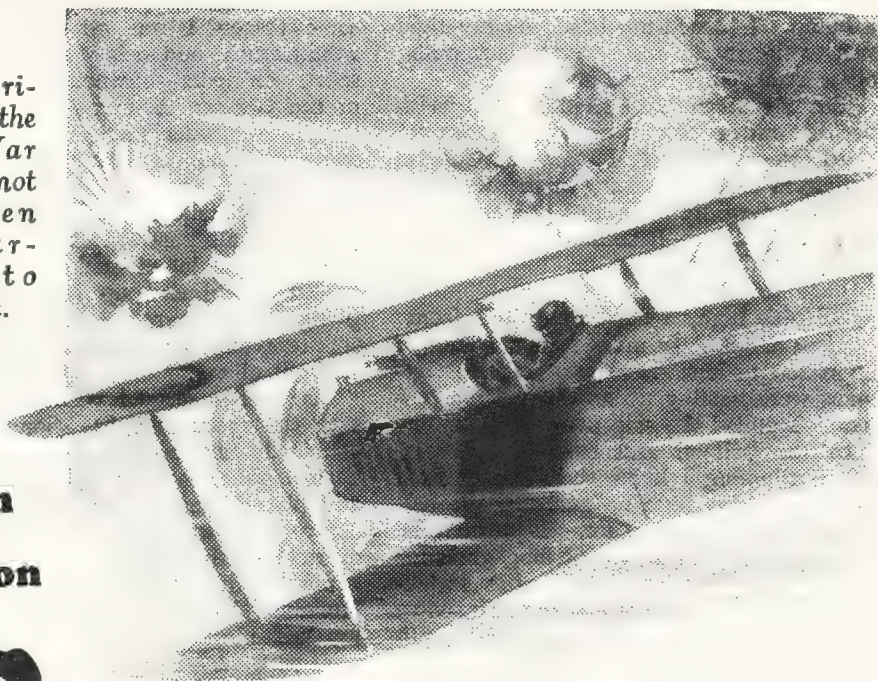
I quickly called the agency and reported all that had happened. That evening an Indian policeman came up and arrested the fellow who continually cursed because I didn't give him enough water.

He later confessed all he knew about the fire-setting gang, and within a week we had them behind the bars.

But after that I took no chances on being saved by a fellow fifteen miles away—I wore a gun on my hip!

An experience in the Great War of a sort not many men have survived to describe.

By
**John
Lee
Pierson**



Shot Down

WHILE attached to the 94th Aero Squadron on duty in the battle zone, I had one of the most dangerous and yet amusing experiences which I encountered while serving as an aviator during the World War.

I had a ten-day leave coming due me, and I had "put in" for it to begin the date of my birthday. Half of the night before my leave was due I spent in soaking the grease- and oil-spots off my one and only uniform, and in packing a few things that I would require. At seven in the morning I went to Headquarters for my pass. When I entered the room I saw the C. O. with a frown on his face. Upon seeing me he said, "Sorry! Read this."

I took the paper and glowered at these words:

"All future leaves of absence will be canceled, as all pilots will be required for a concentrated drive on the enemy. Details following in a later dispatch."

I felt stunned for a moment; then I let out a string of denunciations of those in General Headquarters.

"Now, now, Pierson," the C. O. remonstrated, "don't go popping off and saying

things you'll regret later. This is war, you know!"

"The hell with the war!" I replied, walking out and slamming the door in a blaze of anger. I passed several of my flying chums on the way back to my quarters. As I passed them they shot some of their usual kidding at me. I told them to "go to the devil and leave me alone."

AT noon I had not yet cooled off, when I reported for my afternoon patrol flight—sulkily I snapped out growls while getting the ship ready.

A mechanic gave a pull on the prop and the motor roared out. After testing the motor a moment, I had the blocks pulled out from under the wheels. I let out the throttle and the small ship bounded away like an angry wasp. A few moments later I was climbing into the skies.

I passed over the lines about nine thousand feet high. Looking over the side I saw the trenches standing out, ragged, light-colored gashes on the brown and yellow blur of the earth below, with here and there a puff of smoke as some shell burst.

Suddenly my plane jerked as if it had hit

a bump. I turned my head; on my right side to the rear I saw several black puffs; other black puffs leaped about me.

But my anger bred recklessness. With a curse and a look of contempt down toward the earth, where I knew the German antiaircraft batteries firing on me were concealed, I flew around. But not an enemy flyer could I see—it seemed I had the air to myself that day.

FLYING high, I flew along the front; when about sixty miles from my field, I happened to look down and saw the Germans were sending up an observation balloon. I pulled the ship over to get in line with the balloon and started to climb. While climbing I knew there would be a patrol hovering high up guarding the balloon. But I didn't care. I pushed the stick over and went into a long glide for the balloon. My struts and wires shrieking against the downward rush of air, down I plunged with the speed of a meteor—until it was too late to pull aside even had I so wished—straight at the grayish-brown bag.

Around me I saw black puffs spring out of the air, and I knew that several batteries of antiaircraft had opened upon me. I fired several bursts from the machine-guns to warm them up, as the Germans on the ground worked frantically with the winches to pull the sausage down. The observers in the balloon went over the sides, their chutes opened up, and they safely descended to earth.

With a feeling of reckless abandon I opened the throttle wide; the motor gave a mighty roar. My hand found and pressed the thumb-piece on top of the stick, sending two streaks of flame into the big bag. As the guns poured out their incendiary tracer and set fire to the balloon, my ship swept over and up for a breakneck zoom. As I leveled off, I saw several holes appear in my right wing as if punched with a pencil and I knew a German flyer was on my tail. I banked off to the left and climbed upward, but my antagonist was a good one and couldn't be shaken. I shot into an Immelman in an endeavor to get out of range, but as I did so I crossed his range-sight—his guns roared into the bottom of my ship, shooting away the socket of the control-stick and getting me in the leg with a bullet.

My ship nosed over, for I had no control to level her off, and went into a dive and then a spin. The German saw that for

some reason I was out of control and would crash, and being one of those rare sportsmen flyers—of whom there were a few in the German air-corps—he did not attempt to murder me. Down I plunged, while working desperately with the controls, trying to pull the ship out of its dive.

This dope about a chap having a grand review of his past life, as he is about to pass out, is a lot of bunk! All I saw was how I would end up in my downward plunge—one charred heap of wires, metal, splinters, and bones, the bones being what was left of *me*.

The earth seemed rushing toward me with the speed of light. Somehow I mechanically snapped open the safety belt. Then I pulled my feet from the rudder-bar and placed them where the socket of the control-stick was shot away, forming a sort of socket with the insteps of my feet; then I pushed the bottom of the control-stick into this. I gave a silent prayer, and made my last effort. The gods of war or luck were with me—I pulled the ship out of the spin and into a steep glide, which was about all I had time to do.

I was now only twenty feet or so from the ground. Straight ahead of me I saw the trunk of a tree about fifteen feet high and toward this my plane rushed like a demon.

Again I played the stick, and leveled off a little more, though it seemed not enough to save me. But luck was with me—I felt the ship lunge, then flop over and throw me out as the landing-gear hit the top of the stump. There was a great red flash, then darkness as I hit the ground.

I REMEMBER walking down a long tunnel and looking toward the entrance. I saw white figures flying about, and I heard musical chimes. This must be the end—it looked as though I was entering Heaven for judgment, to be cast thence into Hades for my many follies. I started to curse the army on account of having to miss my leave to Paris. . . .

As I returned to consciousness, I heard a gruff voice say: "He'll live—anyone who can swear the way he can, will pull through!"

What I had taken for angels were the white caps and uniforms of the nurses, and the chimes were surgical instruments being banged about.

I recovered, to enjoy many leaves of absence to Paris!

Blue, Fast Color

By
**W. Hamilton
Stuart**

Wherein a moving-picture director encounters dark trouble.



THE first time I saw him he was traveling as fast as any human being ever moved with his feet upon the ground. He was naked, with the exception of a small breech-cloth that girded his loins, and a black derby hat that had been jammed down upon his head until the brim seemed to rest upon his very large ears.

He was tall, at least six feet three, and about as broad as a good-sized sapling. His arms and hands hung down nearly to his knees, while his broad flat feet were enormous. His color under the strong Hollywood sunlight was unmistakably blue.

I had previously heard a great deal about this negro, as he seemed to be of common interest to nearly everyone connected with the studio—that he was a good worker, in fact was considered by far the best colored extra that came on the lot. He possessed one great asset that was of quite some importance, and that was his ability to play the piano.

Many of the directors had often found an opportunity to include him in some small part when they were obliged to go upon outside locations to some of the smaller mining towns or villages. Many of these locations rarely have any form of entertainment, other than that which is created by the professionals themselves, and so he was taken along, more for his piano-playing than the actual work he performed in the pictures.

No one around the lot knew his real name, for he answered to the one word which always appeared opposite the name

space, upon the "extra" talent vouchers at the office. And that one word was, *Blue*.

There had not been many outside locations of late, and therefore until now Blue had had but very little work. He had never been at all inclined to work in any of the many animal pictures which the studio was then producing. I had been told that when one director had offered him this class of extra work, he had answered:

"Yo-all aint talking to me, no sir. Thank yo' jes de same, sir. But yo' sees I nebber did jes believe dat Daniel-in-de-lions'-den story, nohow. Annimules an' me don't get along togedder a-tall."

Now, Blue made no secret that he had a predominating fear and that was of Tod-dles, the elephant. But times had been bad for Blue, and at last he had decided to take one chance, so was now hard at work in one of those dangerous "annimule" pictures.

The studio was at this time in the midst of making a huge African production. Upon the back lot had been erected a large Zulu village, part of which had been inclosed by an arena of iron bars. Here the animal scenes were to be taken, with fourteen full-grown lions, the property of the picture organization's fine zoo.

IT was lunch-time, and some two hundred negroes who were being utilized as Zulus in the production were huddled close together under the few small trees, seeking what little shade was possible and trying to keep out of the rays of the hot

noonday sun. The Zulu huts, which they might have found far cooler, and where they might have had much more comfort, were evidently much too close to that arena of wild beasts for their liking. It was a most amusing and unusual sight, as they sat there bunched together, munching their lunches, joking, laughing and happy, the bright yellow breech-cloths against their naked black bodies, and their heads covered by an odd array of straw, felt and derby hats.

From the Zulu village came the shrill sound of a woman's scream—then another shriek, followed by the shouts of the men.

"Lions loose! Look out for the lions! Watch out—"

That was enough. With one accord, two hundred black bodies made one consistent skyward movement. Never have two hundred bodies jumped more quickly. The low trees, hardly capable of supporting one-quarter the weight now crowded upon them, literally drooped under the strain as the frightened negroes scrambled upward to even the smallest branches, where they clung with arms and legs twisted around the limbs in deathlike grips. How they all managed to find parking space was a mystery. But the effect was certainly grotesque in the extreme.

From the lower branches, as though they were draped with a hanging moss, dangled some hundreds of black feet and legs which came within three feet of the ground. There was one, however, who had not found a tree—Blue. And how he was traveling! His long strides were so fast that his big flat feet seemed hardly to touch the ground as they flapped in the dust of the road, while his long arms swung like pendulums in the air.

As he darted past, I could hear the puffing moan and the nearly breathless words that escaped his trembling lips:

"Oh, Lawd! . . . Oh, Lawd! . . . Feet, yo' gotter take me!"

The head keeper, who was taking the elephant Toddles to the stables, hearing the uproar and cry that the animals were loose, left the elephant, who in reality was a very docile beast, to attend to the much more important matter of looking after those really dangerous animals.

Blue was either too frightened to see the now overloaded trees, or else he had much more confidence in his huge feet and legs, for he passed them without a glance, and like a shot headed for the bridge, which crossed a small and very muddy creek.

The elephant, not having been used to such shouting and excitement, decided at about this time to seek more quiet and secluded pastures of his own. And so it chanced that Toddles started upon the bridge on one side just as Blue started upon the other.

They had nearly reached the center before either became aware of the other's approach. The elephant, seeing this black man charging directly at him, came to a sudden stop. So did Blue, but his hesitancy was momentary. His hands shot upward, and then, like the chameleon, he seemed to change from his former blue to a sickly gray. There was one shout—"Oh, Lawd!" And with a seemingly impossible spring, he dived headfirst over the rail, to bury himself nearly to his waist in the soft mud. There he stuck, upside-down, his long black legs kicking frantically in midair.

IN spite of my laughter I realized that he would soon smother if left in that position, so out I waded into the mud, gained a good hold of his kicking legs and after much tugging and pulling he was extracted. He gave one big snort which threw the soft mud from his mouth and nostrils as though it had been shot from a cement-gun, and through mud-incased lips, he gasped:

"Did—did—he get me? Am he done gone?"

I assured him that the elephant had turned back, and further that Toddles was perfectly tame and harmless and would not bother anyone.

"Yo'-all gwine to believe dat if yo' wants to, but I done knows he's a man-killer, dat what he am! Me an' him gwine keep far away fo' ebber mo'. No mo' dem annimule picters fo' me—no sir, nebber. Dat am no kind ob work fo' good actors like me. I'm done, dat's all."

There now arose the cry that all was safe, and as I afterward discovered, but one lion had been loose and he was soon back in the arena. Blue heaved a great sigh of relief and started for the road where he was halted by one of the assistant directors who had been assuring the still-clinging blackberries that all was over and safe for them to come down from their uncertain perches.

It was but shortly after the above incident that I found that one of the many episodes in the story that I was about to produce called for a very dramatic situation aboard a steamship at sea, after an uncontrollable fire had been discovered.

To relieve the tenseness of this situation the author had at this point written into the script a comedy touch, dealing with one of the waiters, supposedly a member of the ship's crew. This waiter, having become frightened upon the discovery that the ship was afire, was to be one of the first to come dashing from one of the entrances, race madly down the deck, to dive into the first lifeboat just as the sailors swung out the davits.

For this bit of acting, my thoughts naturally turned to Blue. And now, as the steamer pulled out from the dock, from the open doorway of the saloon there drifted the lively piano strain of some ragtime melody and the deep bass voice picked up the refrain of, "Down in Alabam'." Blue was now in his element, and happy.

Some two miles offshore we began our work of placing upon the film scene after scene of frantic men and women endeavoring to leave a burning ship at sea. And now I was ready for the one with Blue, the last to be taken that day.

One camera was set so as to take in the full-length of the deck and also the lifeboat, while another camera, placed in a smallboat, by the side of the steamer, was to photograph the boat, as it hit the water.

All was now ready. Blue, bareheaded and barefooted, dressed in a long, loose white nightshirt, was to come out of a door forward, run toward the camera wild-eyed with fright, and dive into the lifeboat.

All this I thoroughly explained to him.

"And remember, Blue, I know just how you can dive, and I want it exactly that way. You understand?"

"I knows, boss. But does I look glad or does I look sad?" he asked, grinning.

"You're to look frightened, very scared," I told him.

What I did not tell him was that the ropes that were holding the lifeboat had been cut nearly through, and that the minute he landed in that boat his added weight would part those ropes, and he and the boat would be hurled to the waters below. Had I ever given him an inkling of this condition, in all probability the scene never would have been taken.

I sent him to his station at the bow of the ship, called over the side and found that the camera-operator was ready and then gave the word for him to come.

He came loping down the deck at a dog-trot. His expression was excellent, but the run was impossibly slow.

"Stop! Blue, come here. I told you to run, not walk. You moved fast enough that day the lions were loose. Why can't you move now?"

"Yassuh. But if yo' recomembers, them conditions were mighty powerful different."

Again we were ready. This time he was running; his big bare feet seemed to stretch out yards ahead of his body as they flap-flapped down the hard deck. At the proper place he turned, made a very pretty dive into the boat, the ropes parted, and Blue and the boat were dropped to the waters below. The boat hit upon its side with an impact that threw Blue clear, shot him into the air, turned him over, and he plunged headfirst into the water.

The scene was excellent and just what I wished would happen. But where was Blue? He seemed to be under the water for the longest time.

And now above the surface of the water there appeared a large black gripping hand, followed by a sputtering and blowing black head. Through the water that ran from his nose and mouth, he managed to shout:

"Get—me!"

As I had a number of smallboats, manned by excellent swimmers, for that very purpose, he was soon pulled into one of these, and shortly was back on the ship.

NOW came the word of one of those sad things that happen in film business. The camera-operator, in the boat below, called up that his camera had buckled on the scene. This means that the film had in some manner become stuck and had wound around the sprockets of the camera and that the one shot that I wanted so badly was lost, and that the scene would have to be taken all over. I called Blue to me and said:

"Sorry, Blue, but we had a buckle, and we have to take it over—" But that was as far as I got.

"No *suh!* Haint gwine in dat water no mo'. Nossuh! Yo' says what yo' gwine cut whens I done gets inter de boat, not whens I hits de water. Yo' knows I can't swim, an' besides, dat water is full ob sharkses!"

"Oh, nonsense!" I said. "There are no sharks around here. Why there is not a shark within hundreds of miles of here and never has been."

"Yo' jes' believe dat if yo' wants to. I *knows!* Didn't I done see dem, all swimmin' around, like, when I went down?"

Yassuh! Lawdy, I jes' keeps gwine down an' down, ober a mile. An' when I comes up, shore nuf I sees all kinds ob sharkses. Millions ob dem, yassuh!"

I plainly saw that it was no use to argue along this line, so tried different tactics.

"Blue, you remember, not so long ago, you said that I saved your life, when I pulled you from the mud?"

"Yassuh. Yo' shore done dat."

"And you also said you would do anything for me because you were very grateful. Is this the way you start to show your gratefulness?" There was no response.

"You are a regular actor, are you not?" For the first time I noticed that I had hit a responsive chord. "I am going to give you the regular actor's pay, fifteen dollars, extra. Come on now, let's go."

"Yassuh—since yo' puts it dat er way, I done s'pose I's gwine to do hit—but don' yo' think it am fo' de money. But I's gwine fo' to do hit fo' you dis once mo'."

"All right, Blue, and thank you. That was spoken just like the regular actor I know you to be. Go on down now, and get that shirt and hurry back."

In the meantime the property men had been busily engaged getting the boat back and were ready to retake the scene.

But where was Blue?

Turning to my assistant, I said: "Go down and see what is keeping that dinge so long. We wont have light much longer."

SHORTLY the assistant returned, convulsed with laughter, and naturally I asked the reason.

"Wait until you see him," said the assistant.

I did not have long to wait, for out of the narrow doorway squeezed Blue—but what a different Blue than the one who had just gone down! His otherwise thin body stuck out in the middle like a barrel. He did not come near the camera, where I

stood, but started off up the deck toward his station.

"Blue," I called, "come here!"

Sheepishly he returned, slowly waddling down the deck.

"What you got on under that shirt?" I asked.

"Haint got nothin'."

"Lift up that shirt," I told the assistant. And now arose a burst of laughter from the entire crowd. Blue, not satisfied with one life-preserver, had two, one strapped above the other across his middle.

Had he ever gone into the water the way he had those preservers strapped upon him, his head would have been buried and he would have come up feet first.

"What is the idea of those life-preservers? And why the two?" I asked.

"Well, suh, I done calkilates as how if I puts on two ob dem, I's gwine come up powerful fast-like."

"Well, take them off and in a hurry. I can't waste any more time. The light is nearly gone."

"Nossuh, dey gwine stay wid me!"

And all my arguments had not the slightest effect. The best I was able to do, was to get one of them off and to place the other in its proper position. And even while this was being done, he was very suspicious that we were going to take both away.

We finally got the scene, and I was placing my script within my brief-case as a wet and dripping Blue appeared before me.

"Boss—I's done tol' yo' I's gwine do anything fo' yo', an' I done gone an' done hit. Yo' saved mah life, an' now we's eben. Two times I done risks mah life fo' yo'-all, goin' down miles in dat ocean wid all dem sharkses. I'm a drama actor, I am. I's quit dat stunter's work right now, fo' eber mo'."

And off he started, his flat wet feet slap-slap-slapping against the wood of the deck.

\$500 In Cash Prizes

AFTER reading these five stories of Real Experience, you may feel that you too can write, in two thousand words or less, a true story of Adventure, Mystery, Humor, Sport or Business that will be deserving of a prize. If you wish to try this, write the story in your own way and send it to the Real Experience Editor of The Blue Book Magazine, 36 South State Street, Chicago, with stamps for its return if the Editor doesn't retain it for publication. If he does keep it, the Magazine's check for one hundred dollars will be sent you. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return.

How the LaSalle Problem Method Increases Your Salary



—Why in six months' time alone as many as 1,248 LaSalle members reported definite salary increases totalling \$1,399,507, an average increase per man of 89 per cent!



No matter what you are making now, you are interested in any plan which suggests a practical way to increase your earnings—within a comparatively short time. There is such a plan—it is known as the LaSalle Problem Method—and its practical value is attested by thousands of men who have employed it to plus their native aptitude with systematic training. Read these typical experiences:

Boosts Salary 137 Per Cent—"I worked hard for 4 years in a clerical position and had plenty of opportunities, but was not fitted to accept them. I saw that something had to be done if I ever hoped to get ahead. I had never had any training in accountancy, but I enrolled for the LaSalle Higher Accountancy course. Today, just fifteen months later, I am Assistant Treasurer of my firm and enjoy the benefits of a 137 per cent increase in salary, and I have not yet finished the course."

PHILIP S. BLESSING, Pennsylvania.

From \$55 a Month to \$10,000 a Year—"When I first took your course in Traffic Management, thirteen years ago, I was a bill clerk with the B. & O. Railroad—at a salary of \$55 a month. For the last five years I have successfully conducted a Freight Bureau of my own, through which I am now serving more than 500 clients. During these five years my income has averaged better than \$10,000 a year. I owe my success mainly to LaSalle training."

S. MOSS, Jr., New York.

Steel Worker Becomes General Manager—"For a number of years I was assistant roller at the Carnegie Steel Mills. Realizing that hands and feet would not do for me any longer, I decided to give my brain a business training. Today I am Treasurer and General Manager of W. C. DuComb Co., Inc., Detroit—with easier hours, work that I like, and a larger income. LaSalle has been the instrument to my success."

RALPH H. BERNDT, Detroit.

Always a Bigger Opportunity Just Ahead—"Before I had completed my first course with LaSalle, I got the chance I had been looking for—with this company of which I am now Sales Manager. Since that time it seems as though one opportunity has followed another, just as fast as I could make myself ready. Incidentally my salary has been increased more than 500 per cent."

E. T. ORCUTT, New Jersey.

When thousands of men in the United States and Canada (not to mention many hundreds in England, Australia, China and other foreign countries) choose the LaSalle Problem Method to speed their progress—when over 4,000 LaSalle members belong to the LaSalle One Hundred Per Cent Club, having more than doubled their incomes—when the average increase reported by other thousands is 89 per cent—surely the LaSalle Problem Method must offer an unusually sound way of securing quickly the kind of experience that can be *cashed*. It does. And here are very good reasons why:



You Learn by Doing

Suppose it were your privilege every day to sit in conference with the head of your firm. Suppose every day he were to lay before you in systematic order the various problems he is compelled to solve, and were to explain to you the principles by which he solves them. Suppose that one by one you were to work those problems out—returning to him every day for counsel and assistance—

Granted that privilege, surely your advancement would be faster—by far—than that of the man who is compelled to pick up experience hit-or-miss.

Under the LaSalle Problem Method you pursue, to all intents and purposes, that identical plan. You advance by solving practical problems.

Only—instead of having at your command the counsel of a single individual—your Chief—you have back of you the organized experience of the largest business training institution in the world, the authoritative findings of scores of able specialists, the actual procedure of the most successful business houses.

Thus—instead of fumbling and blundering—you are *coached* in the solving of the very problems you must face in the higher positions. Step by step, you work them out for yourself—until, at the conclusion of your training, you have the kind of experience for which men are willing and glad to pay real money.

Send for Salary-Increasing Plan

The details of the LaSalle Problem Method—often spoken of as the *salary-increasing plan*—will be sent you for the asking. Whether you adopt the plan or not, the basic information it will place in your hands, without cost, is of very real and definite value. And—it's FREE.

Balance the two minutes that it takes to fill out the coupon against the rewards of a successful career—then clip and mail the coupon NOW.

LaSalle Extension University

THE WORLD'S LARGEST BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTION

-----Find Yourself Through LaSalle-----
LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 4369-R Chicago

I would welcome an outline of the LaSalle plan, together with a copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

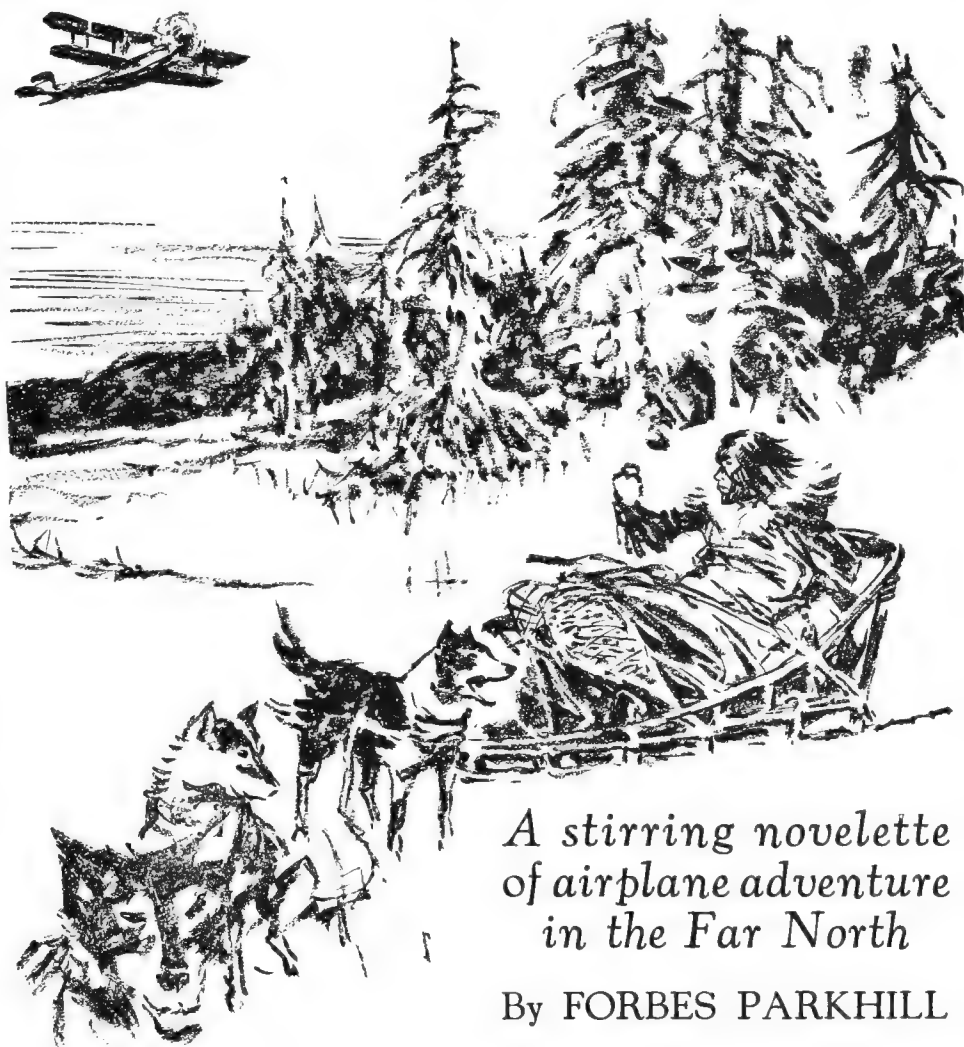
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management: Managerial, Sales and Executive positions. | <input type="checkbox"/> Law: LL.B. Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy: Auditor, Comptroller, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. A. Coaching for Advanced Accountants | <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Finance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management—Foreign and Domestic | <input type="checkbox"/> Credit and Collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Station Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraphy—Railway and Commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography: Training in the new superior Stenotypy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Spanish |



free!
mail coupon now

Name _____ Present Position _____ Address _____

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.



*A stirring novelette
of airplane adventure
in the Far North*

By FORBES PARKHILL

"The Empire of the Arctic"

With specially engrossing installments of "Tanar of Pellucidar" by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and "The Lair of the Leopard" by James Edwin Baum, and many swift-paced

short stories by such writers as Clarence Herbert New, Leland S. Jamieson, Jay Lucas, Seven Anderton and the like, this fine novelette will appear in the next, the May, issue of

The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The Consolidated Magazines Corporation, Publisher, 36 So. State St., Chicago

"I know an easy way to keep from getting fat Light a Lucky instead of eating sweets."

Nazimova
Nazimova
Famous Stage Star

THE modern common sense way—reach for a Lucky instead of a fattening sweet. Everyone is doing it—men keep healthy and fit, women retain a trim figure. Lucky Strike, the finest tobaccos, skillfully blended, then toasted to develop a flavor which is a delightful alternative for that craving for fattening sweets.

Toasting frees Lucky Strike from impurities. 20,679 physicians recognize this when they say Luckies are less irritating than other cigarettes. That's why folks say: "It's good to smoke Luckies."

Note: Authorities attribute the enormous increase in Cigarette smoking to the improvement in the process of Cigarette manufacture by the application of heat. It is true that during 1928, Lucky Strike Cigarettes showed a greater increase than all other Cigarettes combined. This confirms in no uncertain terms the public's confidence in the superiority of Lucky Strike.

Nazimova

Brilliant Dramatic
Star now appearing
with Civic Repertory
Theatre.

"It's toasted"

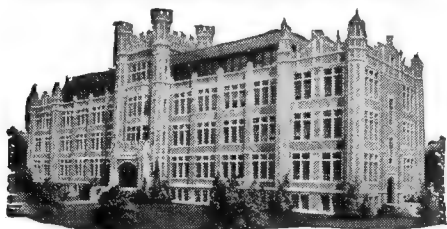
No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

© 1929, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers



Reach
for a
Lucky
instead
of a
sweet.

Home of the International Correspondence Schools



Go to High School at Home

You can secure a high school education right at home by studying the splendid new courses recently prepared by the International Correspondence Schools.

These courses are equivalent to the courses given in resident high schools. They have been specially arranged for men and women who wish to meet college entrance examinations, to qualify for a business position, or to make up the education they missed when forced to leave school too soon. A diploma is awarded at graduation.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2418-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course I have checked below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |

Name.....

Address.....

SONG WRITERS!

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES ARE PAID UPON publishable work. ANYONE having original ideas for Songs may submit poems for examination and advice.—

WALTER NEWCOMER, 1674 Broadway, N. Y.

MEN ARE WANTED



Write today for
Free Booklet—

and contract showing how we assist you to a position after graduation or refund your tuition.

In Railway Traffic Inspection

and they get as high as \$250 per month salary We'll train you—and upon completion of your training—assist you to a position paying at least \$120 per month salary plus expenses, or refund your tuition.

It only takes about 3 months of spare time home study and you're ready to step into a profitable position with rapid salary advances to \$175 and up. It's beautiful outdoor work with regular hours—away from dingy shops and monotonous desks.

For ten years our graduates have been offered positions—and have found in Traffic Inspection a highly satisfactory career.

Standard Business Training Institute

Div.-12, Buffalo, New York

EARN UP TO \$250 per month SALARY

Want a Government Job? RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS MAIL CARRIERS

\$1700 to \$3000 Year
TRAVEL—See your country on government pay
MEN—WOMEN, 17 Up SHOULD MAIL COUPON IMMEDIATELY
Steady Work. No Layoffs. Paid Vacations.



FRANKLIN INSTITUTE,
Dept. P-284, Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge: 32-page book describing U. S. government positions open to men and women with list of positions and full particulars telling how to get them.

Name.....
Address.....

A Great Combination!

“For the Old Bar Diamond”

A prize-fight story and
cowboy story in one!

By JAY LUCAS

HE started his career as a cowboy at sixteen. Later he was for eight years a professional hunter of wolves and mountain lions in Arizona. Then he began to write the stories like “The Boss of the Rocking Rafter” and “Vanishing Herds” which rapidly won him reputation. Recently he spent some months at a prizefighter’s camp, and he has put the experience to good use in the engrossing story which is scheduled to be published,

In the forthcoming
May issue of—

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The Consolidated Magazines Corporation,
Publisher, 36 So. State St., Chicago

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.



...and it certainly makes good syrup

SUGAR, water and Mapleine—that's all!

And almost instantly you have pure, sparkling syrup of tempting and delightful flavor for waffles, pancakes or French toast. You'll find it so easy to make this rich golden syrup at home and so convenient. Economical, too—Mapleine cuts syrup bills in half.

[Send trade-mark from Mapleine carton for new Bridge Score Pad]

CRESCENT MANUFACTURING COMPANY
Dept. 17 Seattle, Washington

MAPLEINE

For syrup...for flavoring

LEARN AUTOS AT HOME! Make Big Money

Stop selling your time for low pay. Get my FREE Auto Book. See how I train you in spare time for a Good Job paying up to \$75 a week. Get details of my big offer now. Write today, stating age and occupation. B. W. Cooke, Directing Engineer, Chicago Motor Training Corporation, 1516 Sunnyside Avenue, Dept. 1864, Chicago.

30 Days' Free Trial

New Models now ready for delivery direct from our factory. Astonishing low prices and terms. No net pay until you get them.

RIDER AGENTS WANTED to ride and exhibit sample. Make big money. Many models \$21.50 up.

Guaranteed \$1.50 each, wheels, lamps, horns, equipment at half usual prices. Send No Money. Write for our marvelous prices and terms on RANGER Bicycles.

Mead CYCLE CO. Dept. A-14 CHICAGO

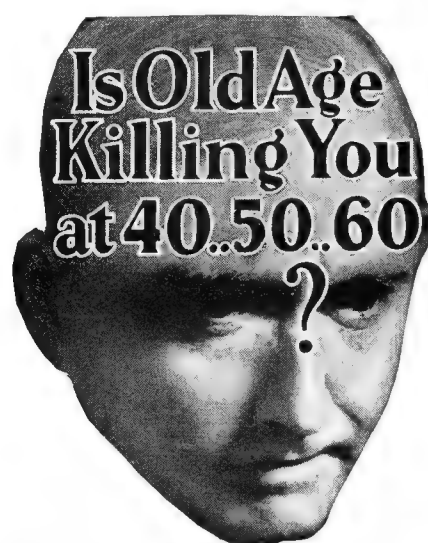


BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only 5,000 Certified Public Accountants in the United States. We train you thoroughly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Training under the personal supervision of William B. Casterholz, A. M., C. P. A., and a large staff of C. P. A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays." LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 4369-H Chicago. The World's Largest Business Training Institution

MONEY FOR YOU AT HOME

YOU can earn good money in spare time at home making display cards. No selling or canvassing. We instruct you, furnish complete outfit and supply you with work. Write to-day for free booklet. The MENHENITT COMPANY Limited 740 Dominion Bldg., Toronto, Ont.



Are you aging too soon . . . getting up 5 to 10 times at night . . . is vitality ebbing steadily away . . . are you definitely on the down grade, half-living, blue, depressed, subject to chronic constipation, chronic fatigue, backache, foot and leg pains? Then look to the vital prostate gland.

New Facts About the Prostate Gland

In men past 40, do you know that these symptoms are often the direct result of prostate gland failure? Are you aware that these symptoms frequently warn of the most critical period of a man's life, and that prostate trouble unchecked usually goes from bad to worse . . . that it frequently leads to years of fruitless treatment and even surgery . . . that it even threatens life itself?

FREE to Men Past 40

No man past 40 should go on blindly blaming old age for these distressing conditions. Know the true meaning of these symptoms. Send for a new, illustrated booklet, "Why Many Men are Old at 40," written by a well-known American Scientist, and see if these facts apply to you.

Natural Method

There is little or nothing that medicine can do for the prostate gland. Massage is annoying, expensive and not always effective. Now this scientist has perfected a totally different kind of treatment that you can use in your own home. It employs no drugs, medicine, or violet rays. It stimulates the vital prostate gland in a new natural way, and it is as harmless as brushing your hair. 50,000 men have used it with remarkable results.

Swift Natural Relief

Now physicians and surgeons in every part of the country are recommending this non-medical treatment. So directly does this new safe treatment go to the prostate gland that noticeable relief often follows overnight. So remarkable are the results that you can test it under a guarantee that unless you feel 10 years younger in 6 days you pay nothing.

Scientist's Book Free

Send now for this Scientist's free book and learn these new facts about the prostate gland and old age ailments.

Simply mail the coupon to W. J. Kirk, president, 6816 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio.

If you live West of the Rockies, address The Electro Thermal Co., 303 Van Nuys Building, Dept. 68-S, Los Angeles, Calif. In Canada, address The Electro Thermal Co., Desk 68-S, 44 Yonge St., Toronto, Can.

W. J. Kirk, Pres., 6816 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio.

Without obligation, kindly send me a free copy of "Why Many Men are Old at 40."

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

LOFTIS

BROS. & CO. ESTD 1888

DIAMONDS WATCHES

CASH or CREDIT



No. 17
Blue White, perfect-cut Diamond. Solid 18-k White Gold. Price \$100. Terms: \$10 down, then

\$2.50
A Week



No. 28
Blue White perfect-cut Diamond. The ring is Solid 18-k White Gold. \$37.50. Pay \$3.75 down, then

\$1.00
A Week

Genuine Diamonds GUARANTEED
We import Diamonds direct from Europe and sell direct by mail.

Send For Free Catalog
Over 2,000 illustrations of Diamond-set Jewelry, Watches, Wrist Watches, Pearls, Watch Bags, Silverware, etc. Sent prepaid for your **FREE EXAMINATION**

TERMS: Goods delivered on first payment of one-tenth of purchase price; balance in equal amounts, payable weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly, as convenient. **Money back if not satisfied**

WEDDING RINGS

No. 824—The "Elite" 18-K white gold, \$8.00. Set with Three Diamonds, \$22.50; Five Diamonds, \$32.50; Seven Diamonds, \$42.50; Nine Diamonds, \$52.50; Twelve Diamonds, \$67.50.

Railroad Watches—Guaranteed to Pass Inspection

HAMILTON No. 992, 21 Jewels, Adjusted to 5 positions. Gold \$55
filled 25-Year Case

ELGIN'S LATEST RAYMOND, 21 Jewels; 8 Adjustments. Runs 40 hours one winding. Gold filled 20-Year Case \$55
40 hours one winding. Gold filled 20-Year Case

HOWARD RAILROAD WATCH, 21 Jewels, 8 Adjustments, 25-Year gold filled case \$80

All Railroad Watches sold on convenient credit terms.


LOFTIS

BROS. & CO. ESTD 1888 CREDIT JEWELERS

Dept. M-219 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois
Stores in Leading Cities

Tobacco Habit BANISHED

Let Us Help You



No craving for tobacco in any form after you begin taking Tobacco Redeemer. Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's often a losing fight against heavy odds and may mean a serious shock to the nervous system. Let us help the tobacco habit to quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions. It is marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. This we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded. Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company,
Dept. 308 Clayton Station St. Louis, Mo.

NERVE FORCE

Lack of Power or Energy, Weakness or excessive drains on the Nervous System Winchester's Specific Pill. \$1.00 postpaid, literature free. (Send now.)

Winchester & Co., Est. 70 Years

Box 254, Mount Vernon, N.Y.

Coming!

"THREE WHO WOULD HANG"

A fascinating detective story

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Stop Rupture Worries!

A New Invention Heals Rupture

Test It FREE



Whether you play golf or lead a less strenuous life, an invention has been perfected that does all that a truss or appliance will do—and more, because it really heals the rupture.

Surprisingly light in weight, constructed of materials that are cool, sanitary and non-irritating—it has been adopted by many leading doctors.

In a scientific manner, night and day, at work or rest, it works for your cure. Write today for free trial offer sent in plain sealed envelope.

Brooks Appliance Co., 90 B, State Street, Marshall, Mich.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

BEAUTY HELPS

MASCARILLO for beautifying Eyebrows and Eyelashes, not a dye; 9 shades. Price \$1. Send 10c for samples of Exora Rouge, Cream, Powder and Mascarrillo. Charles W. Meyer, 11 East 12th St., N. Y.

HOW TO ENTERTAIN

PLAYS, Musical comedies and revues, minstrels, comedy and talking songs, blackface skits, vaudeville acts, monologs, dialogs, recitations, entertainments, musical readings, make-up goods. Catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., 623 So. Wabash, Dept. 104, Chicago.

INSTRUCTION

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS. \$158.00 to \$225.00 month. Steady work. See your country. Men 18-35. Sample coaching free. Write immediately.

Franklin Institute, Dept. P24, Rochester, N. Y.

PATENT ATTORNEYS, ETC.

PATENTS—Trademarks—Write for our Guide Book, "How To Obtain a Patent" and Record of Invention Blank, sent Free. Send Model or sketch and description of your invention for our Inspection and Advice Free. Reasonable Terms. Highest References. Prompt service. Victor J. Evans & Co., 696 Ninth, Wash. D. C.

INVENTORS—should write for our guide book, "How to Get Your Patent" and Evidence of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of invention for Inspection and Instructions Free. Best terms. Randolph & Co., Dept. 177, Washington, D. C.

PHOTOPLAYS, STORIES, SONGS, POEMS, ETC.

SONG POEM OR MELODY WRITERS—Write me immediately for a bona fide proposition. Do not hesitate but act promptly.

Send a postal card to
Ray Hibbeler, D13, 2104 N. Keystone Av., Chicago.

SONGWRITERS—Substantial advance royalties are paid on publishable work. Anyone having original ideas for songs may submit poems for examination and free advice.

Walter Newcomer, 1674 Broadway, New York.

MISCELLANEOUS

TOBACCO HABIT Cured or No Pay. Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Guaranteed. Harmless. Used by over 600,000 people. Full treatment sent on trial. Costs \$1.50 if it cures. Nothing if it fails. Superba Co., N1, Baltimore, Md.

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Children's Summer

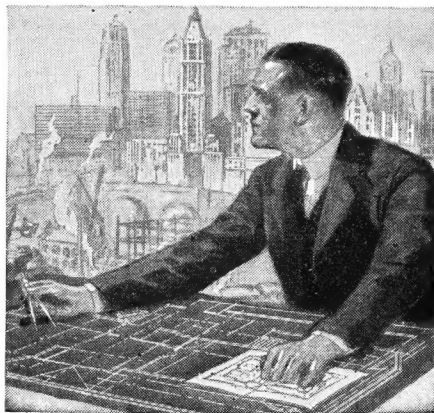
The problem of a happy summer for both parents and children is to put the children in a good summer camp. Assured of the right environment for your children, you are free of all worry, to travel or spend the season at the resorts you most enjoy.

Camps insure the children's health, develop character and self-reliance, teach sports, sportsmanship and many useful accomplishments. Dr. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, endorsed the organized camp as "the most important step in education that America has given the world."

Camps open July first. The best always fill early. Important for you to make your choice now.

If you desire assistance in selecting a camp for your child, we will gladly help you from this personalized knowledge gained from visiting many hundreds of camps. Write fully about your boy or girl, the location and the kind of camp and activities you want. Address

The Director, Department of Education
THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE
Graybar Building, New York City



Former Plasterer Now Earning \$12,000 a Year

"When I enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools, I was a plasterer and I didn't know a thing about blueprints. Today I have my own contracting business and I am able to figure the most difficult jobs and execute them to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. My income is between \$12,000 and \$15,000 a year. It certainly was a lucky day for me when I sent in that I. C. S. coupon."

That's a true story of what just one student of the International Correspondence Schools has done. Every mail brings letters from other ambitious men and women telling of promotions and increases in salary due directly to spare-time study.

One hour a day spent with the I. C. S., in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for success in the work you like best.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

"The Universal University"

Box 2417-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I am marking X:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architect | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Display |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card and Sign Lettering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumber and Steam Fitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heating and Ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing Inspector | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreman Plumber | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Architects' Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service <input type="checkbox"/> English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Telephony | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobiles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Engines <input type="checkbox"/> French |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemist <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising <input type="checkbox"/> Radio |

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

SAY FELLOWS — LEARN ELECTRICITY

Let me tell you in my big free book how I can train you quickly for jobs leading to salaries of \$60.00 to \$200.00 a week. NOT BY CORRESPONDENCE NOT BY BOOKS. But, on real Electrical machinery in 90 DAYS you don't need advanced education or electrical experience. EARN WHILE YOU LEARN. Free employment service for life after you graduate. AVIATION electrical course included free if you enroll now. Clip coupon TODAY and mail it to me for my BIG FREE BOOK. It tells you an amazing way to get into a big pay field



H. C. LEWIS —
President



COYNE

ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., Dept. 49-08, Est. 1899
500 So. Paulina St., Chicago

FILL OUT - MAIL TODAY!

Mr. H. C. Lewis, Pres.
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 49-08
500 So. Paulina Street, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis: Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, Aviation, Radio and Automotive Electrical Courses that are included and how many "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name

Address

City

State

SPECIALIZATION

This is an age of specialization in every field of activity. So complex is civilization and so keen the competition in the affairs of men that success and happiness are assured only to the man or woman who knows his craft—his art—his business.

If you would achieve success, you must first be trained. In the old days training was only acquired by years of arduous apprenticeship. Now in these days when education is so far reaching, there are schools organized to teach in a comprehensive way every specific line of endeavor.

ART SCHOOLS Schools of Design

If you have a desire to paint, draw, design clothes or hats, then an art school or a school of costume design will help you to put your talent to profitable use.

CONSERVATORIES OF MUSIC

If your inclination is to sing or play the violin or piano, then a conservatory of music is what you are looking for.

SCHOOLS OF DOMESTIC SCIENCE

If you have a knack for cooking or running a house, a school of domestic science or housecraft will train you to do it in the best possible way. Positions as teachers, dietitians, cafeteria managers and many others are open to their graduates.

SCHOOLS OF DANCING AND DRAMATIC ART

You may feel the lure of the stage or the movies. There are a dozen different schools of dramatic art or stagecraft that will give you the necessary training.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Possibly your interests are more practical. You may want to be a secretary, a nurse, a physical culture teacher, a druggist or a photographer, an electrician or an accountant. There is a school for every one of these fields of work.

All these vocational schools are advertised in **THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE**. If you are undecided as to what school to choose, write us and we shall be glad to advise you.

Address *The Director, Department of Education*

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Graybar Building

New York City

H A V E A C A M E L



A social success

Camels come to the aid of the party . . . *any*
party where the main idea is to be
joyous and carefree.

CAMELS

© 1929, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco
Company, Winston-Salem, N. C.